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JOHN LOCKE
AND ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

JOHN LOCKE
AND ENGLISH LITERATURE OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
BY
KENNETH MACLEAN

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TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

PREFACE

*T*HE book that had most influence in the Eighteenth Century, the Bible excepted, was Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690). In an age when the proper study of mankind was man, the theories regarding the human mind set forth in the *Essay* necessarily affected religion, government, education, and literature. Sterne said that the principal influences in his life were the Bible and *Locke*, and speaking thus for himself he spoke also for many other men of letters of his century, particularly Addison, Pope, Thomson, and Johnson. But if literature owed a debt to *Locke*, *Locke* also had his obligations to Eighteenth-Century literature for spreading the ideas of the *Essay* concerning Human Understanding.

In this study I endeavour to show how the theories of the mind developed in *Locke's Essay* were criticized, adapted, and popularized by English literature of the Eighteenth Century. A book which thus presents the literary biographies of the most important philosophical ideas of that age will, I hope, be thought something "new and a little out of the way." In discussing *Locke's* ideas in literature I have followed the order and division of the *Essay*, which is summarized throughout this study in a way that may be useful to students of literature.

Mr. Chauncey Brewster Tinker suggested that I make an inquiry into *Locke's* importance to Eighteenth-Century literature, and from beginning to end my work has

benefited by his scholarly advice and personal kindness to an extent which is hardly indicated by this brief acknowledgment.

Mr. Norman L. Torrey, Mr. Lewis P. Curtis, Mr. Stanley M. Pargellis, and Mr. Maynard Mack have been kind enough to read this study, and for their criticism I am very grateful. To several other friends I am indebted for a large measure of help, particularly members of the Department of English in Yale University. I should also like to thank Mr. William C. DeVane, Dr. John F. Fulton, Mr. Howard F. Lowry, and Mr. Charles C. MacLean, Jr., for the aid they have given me. To the staff of the Yale University Library I would express my gratitude for their ever willing and friendly assistance. While preparing this work originally as a dissertation which I presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Yale University, I held the Edward G. Selden Fellowship, for which I would again thank the donor.

K. M.

New Haven,
September, 1936.

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JOHN LOCKE AND ENGLISH LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

THE young student entering an English university in 1730 was advised to study in his second year Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.¹ In 1734 the learned Queen Caroline ordered busts of Locke, Newton, Boyle, Wollaston, and Clarke to be made by the sculptor Rysbrack, and placed in her Grotto at Richmond.² Pope indicates that it was fashionable about this time for intellectual ladies such as Artemisia to read Locke,³ while a pretty girl like Rufa, though chiefly interested in attracting young sparks, would nevertheless be holding a weighty copy of Locke when her portrait was painted.⁴ In March, 1734, the Duchess of Queensberry wrote Swift to ask what should be done with her sons' schooling after they had passed the age covered by Locke's *Thoughts concerning Education*.⁵ A complete discussion of this popular treatise on the instruction of the youth brought the second part of *Pamela* to an erudite conclusion. If a benign Isaac Watts might in these years regard Locke as "the ingenious Director of modern Philosophy,"⁶ a malevolent Bolingbroke could likewise avow that Locke's philosophy "has forced its way into general approbation."⁷ In 1740 Thomas Gray undertook to make of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* a Latin poem, which he affectionately referred to as "Master Tommy Lucretius."⁸ Although Master Tommy "got the worms"⁹ so badly

Bibliographical Note. The text of Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding* used throughout this study, was edited by Alexander Campbell Fraser, and published in two volumes at Oxford, in 1894. "The text has been prepared after collation with the four editions published when Locke was alive [1690, 1694, 1695, 1700], and also with the French version of Coste [1700], done under Locke's supervision" (*Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, xiv).

1. Daniel Waterland, *Advice to a Young Student*, London, 1730, pp. 22-3.
2. J. F. Fulton, *Bibliography of Robert Boyle*, Oxford, 1932, p. 9. The busts are mentioned in a poem, *Richmond-Gardens*, appearing in the *London Magazine*, VII (1738), pp. 38-9. Cf. Pope, *Moral Essays*, IV, 77-8.

3. *Imitations of English Poets*, VI, E. of Dorset. 4. *Moral Essays*, II, 21-4.
5. *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. F. E. Ball, 6 vols., London, 1910-14, V, 58.
6. *Philosophical Essays*, Essay VI, introductory paragraph. This work appeared first in 1733.
7. *Works*, 5 vols., London, 1754, III, 329.
8. Gray, *Works*, ed. Edmund Gosse, 4 vols., New York, [1895], II, 121, n. 3.
9. *Ibid.*, II, 121.

that he remained in fragment form, posterity was not left without a beautiful invocation to John Locke, beginning,

Oh decus! Angliacæ certe O lux altera gentis!¹⁰

An advertisement in the *Covent-Garden Journal* of April 14, 1752, stated that Fielding's *Examples of the Interposition of Providence in the Detection and Punishment of Murder*, a pamphlet which was being distributed gratis, was particularly suitable for the young, since

there is nothing of which Children are more greedy, than Stories of the Tragical Kind; nor can their tender Minds receive more wholesome Food, than that which unites the Idea of Horror with the worst of Crimes, at an Age when all their Impressions become in great Measure, a Part of their Nature: *For those Ideas which they then join together, as Mr. Locke judiciously observes, they are never after capable of separating.*¹¹

One has not read beyond the fourth chapter of *Tristram Shandy*, appearing in 1760, before being informed that the curious custom of winding up the house-clock the first Sunday night of every month

was attended with but one misfortune, which, in a great measure, fell upon myself, and the effects of which I fear I shall carry with me to my grave; namely, that from an unhappy association of ideas, which have no connection in nature, it so fell out at length, that my poor mother could never hear the said clock wound up,—but the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popped into her head—and *vice versa*:—Which strange combination of ideas, the sagacious Locke, who certainly understood the nature of these things better than most men, affirms to have produced more wry actions than all other sources of prejudice whatsoever.¹²

“Locke is universal,” said Warburton.¹³

That the years approximately between 1725 and 1765 were the period of Locke's vogue is attested not only by such happenings and allusions, but also by the frequency with which the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* was reprinted during this time. Between

10. Gray, *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, 185.

11. *Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 30.

12. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, ed. W. L. Cross, New York, 1925, p. 5.

13. *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate [Warburton] to One of His Friends* [Hurd], London, [1808], p. 207. Letter of March 3, 1759.

1727 and 1760 it appeared singly in nine English editions,¹⁴ and in four editions of Locke's collected works.¹⁵ Latin versions appeared in London in 1701, in Amsterdam in 1729, and two years later in Leipzig,¹⁶ while the first German translations were printed in 1755 and 1757.¹⁷ Though an excellent French version of the *Essay* was issued in 1700,¹⁸ twenty-five years later there were still copies of this edition unsold,¹⁹ and the second authorized edition of this translation did not appear until 1729, after which, however, editions in French followed rapidly, in 1735, 1742, 1750, and 1755,²⁰ perhaps owing to the influence of Voltaire, who, in his visit to England from 1726 to 1729, discovered Locke, "a Sage at last," and popularized his philosophy in numerous writings,²¹ especially his *Letters concerning the English Nation*. Voltaire was, nevertheless, hardly justified in claiming as full credit as he did for introducing Locke in France,²² for the young dramatist Philippe Destouches had spent six years in England before 1723,²³ and returned to his country to write a curious comedy entitled *La Fausse Agnès*,²⁴ in which the heroine, having feigned madness to escape the attentions of an undesired suitor, later establishes her sanity by explaining to the court the nature and extent of human understanding as defined in Locke's *Essay*.

Vous voulez juger de moi! Mais, pour juger sainement, il faut une grande étendue de connaissances; encore est-il bien douteux qu'il y en ait de cer-

14. 1729, 1730?, 1731, 1735, 1738, 1741, 1748, 1753, 1760 (H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," *Skrifter Utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademii i Oslo*, II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1930, No. 8, p. 92).

15. 1727, 1740, 1751, 1759 (H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," p. 88).

16. H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," p. 97.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

19. John Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, 2 vols., London, 1923, I, 144.

20. H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," p. 97.

21. See Voltaire, *Le Philosophe Ignorant: Œuvres Complètes*, 52 vols., Paris, 1877-85, XXVI, (47)-95.

22. See his letter of July 15, 1768, to Horace Walpole: "Je peux vous assurer qu'avant moi personne en France ne connaissait la poésie anglaise; à peine avait-on entendu parler de Locke. J'ai été persécuté pendant trente ans par une nuée de fanatiques, pour avoir dit que Locke est l'Hercule de la métaphysique, qui a posé les bornes de l'esprit humain" (Voltaire, *Œuvres Complètes*, XLVI, 79-80).

23. Jean Hankiss, *Philippe Néricault Destouches*, Debreczen, 1918, pp. 402-04.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

taines. . . . Avant donc que vous entrepreniez de prononcer sur mon sujet, je demande préalablement que vous examiniez avec moi nos connaissances en général, les degrés de ces connaissances, leur étendue, leur réalité; que nous convenions de ce que c'est que la vérité, et si la vérité se trouve effectivement. Après quoi nous traiterons des propositions universelles, des maximes, des propositions frivoles, et de la faiblesse ou de la solidité de nos lumières. . . . Quelques personnes tiennent pour vérité, que l'homme naît avec certains principes innés, certaines notions primitives, certains caractères qui sont comme gravés dans son esprit, dès le premier instant de son existence. Pour moi, j'ai long-temps examiné ce sentiment, et j'entreprends de le combattre, de le réfuter, de l'anéantir, si vous avez la patience de m'écouter.²⁵

The vogue of Locke's philosophy in France indicated by this passage was later observed by Goldsmith when in his characteristic survey manner he contemplated from afar the state of polite learning in Europe. He noted that

The fair sex in France have also not a little contributed to prevent the decline of taste and literature, by expecting such qualifications in their admirers. A man of fashion at Paris, however contemptible we may think him here, must be acquainted with the reigning modes of philosophy as well as of dress, to be able to entertain his mistress agreeably. The sprightly pedants are not to be caught by dumb show, by the squeeze of the hand, or the ogling of a broad eye; but must be pursued at once through all the labyrinths of the Newtonian system, or the metaphysics of Locke.²⁶

Fortunately a community of letters was developing in Europe in the second quarter of the Eighteenth Century which made it possible for France and the rest of the Continent to know and value the English philosophers whom England herself was then just beginning to appreciate.

Since the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* was published in 1690, and Locke did not become popular until the second quarter of the Eighteenth Century, it is indicated that his philosophy was at first either ignored or opposed. The latter is the case. So immediate was Locke's recognition that four editions of the *Essay* were required

25. Act III, sc. xii.

26. *Present State of Polite Learning* (1759): *Works*, ed. J. W. M. Gibbs, 5 vols., London, 1884-6, III, 493.

by 1700, despite the fact that this work carried in itself certain obstacles to an easy reception, particularly a style whose bleakness is indulgently described as the inheritance of puritanical austerity.²⁷ Uncharitably Locke's prose is called dull, wooden, without elevation,²⁸ when its intellectual beauty is forgotten. This beauty was apparent to Goldsmith who saw in Locke's style the same clarity and simplicity that characterized the understanding of the philosopher.²⁹ Allowing that the style is satisfactory, still the *Essay* was handicapped because the logic of many passages cannot be followed without considerable effort. "Pray, Sir," Sterne asked, "in all the reading which you have ever read, did you ever read such a book as Locke's *Essay* upon the Human Understanding?—Don't answer me rashly—because many, I know, quote the book, who have not read it—and many have read it who understand it not."³⁰ Formidable as Locke appears in many pages of this work, he will not wither before a blasting query of the Nineteenth Century, "How did the dreary devil stagger like Crockett to a 26th edition?"³¹

Despite the *Essay's* difficult logic and its possible want of style, Locke was not for a moment neglected. Coming as an apostle of peace to set an example of quiet thinking in an age of excitement,³² he suffered the ironic fate of exciting a religious controversy so intense that it might be considered a climax even for the turbulent Seventeenth Century.³³ A philosophy that denied innate ideas of God and morality and dared to suggest man's mind may be a material rather than a spiritual substance, a philosophy that proved human knowledge limited and demonstrated the inferiority of the intellect of a being supposedly formed in the image of the Creator—such a philosophy was almost unanimously condemned in pulpit and

27. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 196, n. 2.

28. Edmund Gosse, *History of Eighteenth Century Literature* (1660–1780), London, 1889, pp. 96, 277.

29. Goldsmith, *Works*, ed. Gibbs, II, 447.

30. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. II, cap. 2: ed. Cross, p. 65.

31. Andrew Lang, quoted in Carl Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, New York, 1922, p. 56.

32. Thomas Fowler, *Locke*, London, 1909, p. 199.

33. For a discussion of the controversy following the publication of the *Essay*, see H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," cap. i. An excellent bibliography of the scores of books and pamphlets relating to this controversy, may be found in the *Cambridge History of English Literature*, VIII, 530–4.

pamphlet. The opposition the *Essay* met in the church had a counterpart in the universities, particularly Oxford, which had previously deprived Locke of a studentship he had held for twenty-five years, because of suspected implications in the Monmouth plot.³⁴ Political, religious, and philosophical opinion combined to induce the heads of the colleges of this university to take measures, in 1703, that would prevent students from reading the *Essay*.³⁵ Opposing such intolerance, John Burton, after his graduation from Corpus Christi in 1717,³⁶ endeavoured to introduce the study of Locke's philosophy in Oxford,³⁷ with such little success, however, that in Johnson's time the *Essay* was still read with caution.³⁸ Cambridge, dreaming in an atmosphere of Platonism,³⁹ would hardly have noticed the *Essay* had it not been for the efforts of Anthony Collins, Locke's young disciple.⁴⁰ The obvious neglect of the improvements in philosophy by England's richest and best endowed universities did much to provoke Adam Smith's long denunciation of all endowed educational institutions,⁴¹ which Gibbon gladly seconded.⁴² The record of Trinity College, Dublin, is admirable when compared with the unprogressive attitude of England's universities, for there William Molyneux instituted the teaching of Locke shortly after the appearance of the *Essay*,⁴³ with at least one significant result, that George Berkeley,

34. *Correspondence of John Locke and Edward Clarke*, ed. Benjamin Rand, Oxford, 1927, p. 18.

Thomas Fowler, *Locke*, p. 40.

Lord Grenville, *Oxford and Locke*, London, 1829. Lord Grenville defends the action taken by Oxford.

Cf. Pope, *Dunciad*, IV, 196:

"Each fierce Logician, still expelling Locke."

35. *Works of John Locke*, 10th ed., 10 vols., London, 1801, X, 277. See also X, 278, 280, 282.

36. DNB.

37. *De Vitâ et Moribus Johannis Burtoni*, S. T. P Etonensis, Epistola Edvardi Bentham, S. T. P. R., Oxford, 1771, pp. 9, 15.

Thomas Fowler, *Corpus Christi*, University of Oxford: College Histories, London, 1898, p. 174.

38. C. E. Mallet, *History of the University of Oxford*, 3 vols., London, 1924-7, III, 128.

39. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, xxxiii.

40. C. E. Mallet, *History of the University of Oxford*, III, 106.

41. *Wealth of Nations*, ed. J. E. Thorold Rogers, 2 vols., Oxford, 1869, II, 357.

42. *Memoirs*, ed. G. B. Hill, London, 1900, p. 54.

43. H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," p. 28.

who entered Trinity in 1700, was trained in this new philosophy.⁴⁴ And long before Locke was admitted to the curriculum of the English universities, young Jonathan Edwards was reading the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* at Yale, discovering in it at the age of fourteen greater pleasure "than the most greedy miser finds, when gathering up handfuls of silver and gold, from some newly discovered treasure."⁴⁵

The adversity Locke met with in English church and school is interesting as it coincides with the response of the literary world. In the *Defense of Poesy* Sir Philip Sidney had argued that "the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher,"⁴⁶ while a half century later the young Milton wrote:

How charming is divine Philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is *Apollo's* lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.⁴⁷

This gracious and natural union of philosophy and poetry characterizing the ages represented by these quotations had no parallel in the years following the publication of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, when, in the discerning words of Akenside, "Locke stood at the head of one party, and Dryden of the other."⁴⁸ The contempt of philosophy for the extravagance of poetry is not only implied but also spoken by Locke, who could not distinguish the excesses of rhymers from those of gamblers.⁴⁹ Had poets been more sparing and cautious in the use of language, their works, he believed, "might be contained in a nutshell."⁵⁰ It is said that Malebranche, a typical philosopher of that period, "never could read, without disgust, a page of the finest verses; and that, although Imagination was

44. W. R. Sorley, "Berkeley and Contemporary Philosophy," *Cambridge History of English Literature*, IX, 316.

45. Quoted in H. B. Parkes, *Jonathan Edwards*, New York, 1930, p. 52.

46. *Defense of Poesy*, ed. A. S. Cook, Boston, 1890, p. 18.

47. *Comus*, 475-9.

48. Mark Akenside, *Pleasures of Imagination*, II, 30, note.

49. *Some Thoughts concerning Education*, sec. 174.

50. *Essay*, III, xi, 26.

manifestly the predominant ingredient in the composition of his own genius, the most elaborate passages in his works are those where he inveighs against this treacherous faculty, as the prolific parent of our most fatal delusions.”⁵¹

The aversion of “men of cold fancies, and philosophical dispositions” for the intemperance and romantic exaggerations of poetry was returned in kind by the poets, who were irritated by the chafing restrictions and trifling investigations of philosophy. A precedent for dislike of metaphysics was well established upon Dryden’s scorn for tedious quibbling and wrangling, indicated in the lines,

Because philosophers may disagree,
If sight b’ emission or reception be,
Shall it be thence inferr’d, I do not see?⁵²

Crabbed philosophy, moreover, had come at the end of the Seventeenth Century to be practically synonymous with religious controversy. While Dryden fostered polemics with *The Hind and the Panther*, “intended,” Swift said, “for a complete abstract of sixteen thousand school-men, from Scotus to Bellarmin,”⁵³ he preserved a distaste for philosophy which would have inclined him to overlook the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* even though Locke had been a schoolmate at Westminster⁵⁴ and was also a fellow member of the Royal Society.⁵⁵ The poet and philosopher might further have been united by reason that each was at one time assailed by Stillingfleet.⁵⁶ It should be remembered, however, that when the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* was published, Dryden, no longer a young man eager for new learning, had become very con-

51. Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy, since the Revival of Letters in Europe: Works*, ed. Sir William Hamilton, 11 vols., Edinburgh, 1854–60, I, 150.

52. *Hind and the Panther*, 646–8.

53. *Tale of a Tub: Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Temple Scott, 12 vols., London, 1897–1922, I, 56.

54. Thomas Fowler, *Locke*, p. 3.

55. A. W. Ward, “Dryden,” *Cambridge History of English Literature*, VIII, 9.

56. See Dryden, *Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 980, n. 237, 1487. For Stillingfleet’s controversy with Locke, see H. O. Christophersen, “Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke,” pp. 35–43; also *Locke, Works*, Vol. IV.

scious of his age.⁵⁷ At the end of a life which had refused the lessons of philosophy, Dryden nevertheless recognized that "something new in philosophy and the mechanics is discover'd almost every year; and the science of former ages is improv'd by the succeeding."⁵⁸ Locke's *Essay* was probably not entirely neglected.

Disgust for metaphysics lay in the inheritance and nature of Swift, who did badly in philosophy in college.⁵⁹ His realistic disposition objected to erecting edifices in the air⁶⁰ and indulging so deeply in abstract problems as the Laputians, whose "minds . . . are so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external taction upon the organs of speech and hearing."⁶¹ Yet among Swift's numerous outbursts against philosophy Locke is spared at least in name, and is conspicuously absent from the ranks of the modern bowmen, as the philosophers are called in the *Battle of the Books*, though most of his associates are on the losing side of the conflict. Some unacknowledged friendship may have existed between these men since Swift's patron, Sir William Temple, is quoted in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* as "an author of great note,"⁶² and furthermore members of the Masham family, at whose manor of Oates Locke spent the last years of his life, were to become intimate friends of Swift.⁶³ An unacknowledged influence of Locke's *Essay* is most apparent in Swift's writings.

Uncompromising disdain for philosophy is registered in Matthew

57. Cf. *Discourse concerning Satire* (1692): "by a slip of an old man's memory" (*Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 318).

Prologue to *Love Triumphant* (1694):

"An old man may at least good wishes give you" (l. 54).

"To Sir Godfrey Kneller" (1694):

"Old as she is, my Muse shall march behind" (l. 87).

Preface to the *Fables* (1700): "I am already come within twenty years of his number, a cripple in my limbs" (*Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 741).

58. *Discourse concerning Satire* (1692): *Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 289.

59. John Forster, *Life of Jonathan Swift, Volume the First, 1667-1711*, New York, 1876, p. 51.

60. *Tale of a Tub: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, (48).

61. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, (163).

62. *Essay*, II, xxvii, 9.

63. See the many references to the Mashams in Swift's *Journal to Stella: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, II, 489.

Prior's long poem, *Alma*, which, after a delightful but futile attempt to locate the seat of the mind, concludes with the lines,

Dear DRIFT, to set our Matters right,
Remove these Papers from my Sight;
Burn MAT's DES-CART', and ARISTOTLE:
Here, JONATHAN, Your Master's Bottle.⁶⁴

Prior's prejudice against philosophy centered upon Locke,⁶⁵ who is most unfavourably represented in an imaginary dialogue with Montaigne,⁶⁶ for which the following verses were well intended:

Lock, wou'd the Human understanding show;
In vain he squanders Thought & Time and Ink.
People themselves most certainly must know,
Better than He cou'd tell, how they can think?

I fancy things may quickly be agreed,
If once for All we state our notions right;
And I (thank gracious Heav'n) need never read
One line that Thou, Friend Lock, did'st ever write.

Sic argumentum pono: if my head
Had been exactly made, and fill'd like Thine,
I shou'd have known what ever thou had'st said,
Tho in Thy work I had not read a line.

And if again, pray mind, Thy head and Mine
Are form'd and stuff'd quite diff'rent from each other;
I n'er shal understand one single line,
Thô I shou'd read thy Folio ten times over.⁶⁷

An interested antipathy for philosophy may well have been the corner-stone upon which Arbuthnot, Swift, and the young Pope

64. *Poems on Several Occasions*, ed. A. R. Waller, Cambridge, 1905, p. 254.

65. Prior succeeded Locke in the position of Commissioner of the Board of Trade at the latter's retirement in 1700 (Thomas Fowler, *Locke*, p. 94).

66. "Dialogue between Mr John Lock and Seigneur de Montaigne": *Dialogues of the Dead and Other Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. A. R. Waller, Cambridge, 1907, pp. 223-46.

67. "Verses Intended for Lock and Montaigne": *Dialogues of the Dead and Other Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. Waller, p. 323.

founded the Scriblerus Club, whose records, completed by 1714, abound in elaborate parodies of the fine points of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.

In a time of such hostility Addison became Locke's champion by frequently reproducing in the *Spectator* sections of the *Essay*, and also by applying Locke's discoveries in a series of papers on the "Pleasures of Imagination."⁶⁸ The philosophical as well as literary merits of these essays probably induced Hume to venture that "ADDISON; perhaps, will be read with pleasure, when LOCKE shall be entirely forgotten."⁶⁹ Another supporter was Richard Blackmore, the recognized enemy of Dryden⁷⁰ and Pope,⁷¹ though it was perhaps not advantageous to Locke's reputation to have it supposed, as is still the case, that the *Creation* represented "his philosophy . . . in a poetical garb."⁷² The belief that Blackmore stands in the same relation to Locke as Lucretius to Epicurus⁷³ has no more foundation than that *Creation* was inspired by a single conclusion in the *Essay*, or that Locke had praised⁷⁴ what the physician-poet said regarding hypotheses in medicine in his Preface to the epic *King Arthur*.⁷⁵

The literary importance Locke was to attain, foreshadowed in Addison's early appreciation of his philosophy, might have been prophesied from the title of the *Essay*. A study of the human understanding and the workings of men's minds had a significance too universal to be long neglected by writers of English literature, however predisposed to scorn philosophy. In reading the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* Bolingbroke confessed he was "led, as it were, thro a course of experimental philosophy. I am shewn my

68. *Spectator*, Nos. 411-21.

Addison succeeded Locke in the position of Commissioner of Appeals at the latter's death in 1704 (Johnson, *Addison: Lives of the English Poets*, ed. G. B. Hill, 3 vols., Oxford, 1905, II, 88).

Cf. Thackeray, *Henry Esmond*, bk. II, cap. 11.

69. "Of the Different Species of Philosophy": *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, 2 vols., London, 1875, II, 5.

70. Dryden, Preface to the *Fables: Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, pp. 748-9.

71. Pope, *Dunciad*, II, 259-60, 302, 370.

72. H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," p. 108.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Locke, *Works*, IX, 426.

75. Richard Blackmore, *King Arthur*, London, 1697, pp. viii-xi.

self; and in every instance there is an appeal to my own perceptions, and to the reflections I make on my own intellectual operations."⁷⁶ If Laurence Sterne were asked to characterize Locke's *Essay*, he would reply, "I will tell you in three words what the book is.—It is a history.—A history! of who? what? where? when? Don't hurry yourself—It is a history-book, Sir, (which may possibly recommend it to the world) of what passes in a man's own mind."⁷⁷ An exposition of the mysteries of human understanding belonged not to philosophy alone but to all life. The new interest Locke's *Essay* excited in the operations of the mind is reflected in Blackmore's command,

Turn on it self thy Godlike Reason's Ray,
Thy Mind contemplate, and its Power survey,⁷⁸

repeated by Akenside:

Then to the secrets of the working mind
Attentive turn.⁷⁹

James Thomson, requesting nature to reveal herself to him, asked particularly that she explain

. . . higher still, the mind,
The varied scene of quick-compounded thought,
And where the mixing passions endless shift.⁸⁰

For Pope the proper study of mankind was man, and more specifically the mind of man, how it receives and forms its ideas. Thus Milton's phrase, "darkness visible,"⁸¹ passes through Locke's proof that "one may truly be said to see darkness,"⁸² to become in Pope's *Moral Essays*,

So darkness strikes the sense no less than light.⁸³

This Eighteenth-Century interest in psychology is what Johnson is thinking of when he thus compares Shakespeare's age with his own:

76. *Works*, IV, 164.

77. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. II, cap 2: ed. Cross, p. 65.

78. *Creation*, VII, 202–03.

80. *Autumn*, 1362–4.

82. *Essay*, II, viii, 6.

79. *Pleasures of Imagination*, I, 520–1.

81. *Paradise Lost*, I, 63.

83. *Moral Essays*, I, 53.

Speculation had not yet attempted to analyze the mind, to trace the passions to their sources, to unfold the seminal principles of vice and virtue, or sound the depths of the heart for the motives of action. All those inquiries, which from that time that human nature became the fashionable study, have been made sometimes with nice discernment, but often with idle subtlety, were yet unattempted. . . . Mankind was not then to be studied in the closet.⁸⁴

To David Hume it appeared that this closet study of man and his mind was a particularly Eighteenth-Century and peculiarly English investigation, succeeding in point of time the Seventeenth Century's investigations of the physical world by Bacon and his contemporaries just as Aristotle's studies of human nature followed by about a century Thales' studies of the physical world.⁸⁵

Many aspects of the life of this century were destined to be affected by the exciting revelations concerning the mind in Locke's *Essay*. Out of a new and sound interpretation of the character of a child's mind evolved principles of education that interested a father like Chesterfield and a mother like Pamela. Theories of government took psychological footings following Locke's analysis of men's understanding. The *Essay's* explanation of the manner in which the human mind frames its idea of a God shifted the foundations of religion, while morality was altered by a restatement of human liberty and freedom. The objective quality of Eighteenth-Century literature is certainly owing in part to the fact that Locke's demonstration that all ideas originate in sensation induced writers to give almost undue attention to the external world. A single curious trait of mind elaborated in the *Essay* provided Sterne with an entirely new principle of literary composition. Few phases of life were untouched by Locke's fascinating discoveries concerning the nature and operations of man's understanding.

The examination of the mind conducted in the *Essay* not only disclosed the constitution and workings of the intellect, but also revealed the fact, never before stressed in philosophy, that human knowledge is limited. About this astounding conclusion all Eighteenth-Century thought was to revolve. Hume, many will agree, is the best source

84. Preface to the *Plays of Shakespeare: Works*, 11 vols., Oxford, 1825, V, 130-1.

85. *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford, 1888, pp. xx-xxi.

for the intellectual history of his age, and this history he seems to have summarized almost perfectly in an essay entitled "Of the Dignity or Meanness of Human Nature," which reads in part:

THERE are certain sects, which secretly form themselves in the learned world, as well as factions in the political; and though sometimes they come not to an open rupture, they give a different turn to the ways of thinking of those who have taken part on either side. The most remarkable of this kind are the sects, founded on the different sentiments with regard to the *dignity of human nature*; which is a point that seems to have divided philosophers and poets, as well as divines, from the beginning of the world to this day. Some exalt our species to the skies, and represent man as a kind of human demigod, who derives his origin from heaven, and retains evident marks of his lineage and descent. Others insist upon the blind sides of human nature, and can discover nothing, except vanity, in which man surpasses the other animals, whom he affects so much to despise. If an author possess the talent of rhetoric and declamation, he commonly takes part with the former: If his turn lie towards irony and ridicule, he naturally throws himself into the other extreme.⁸⁶

So in the Eighteenth Century we find these two sects Hume has defined making an issue of the extent of human knowledge, a problem first investigated in Locke's *Essay*. One group, cherishing the dignity of human nature, was inclined to exalt the powers of man's mind, while the other faction with its turn for irony and ridicule was disposed to make mankind appear meaner by depreciating our faculties of understanding. The former group, led by Isaac Watts and Edward Young, refused to recognize the full restrictions Locke had placed upon the understanding, and on every question where preferences and opinions were permissible took the optimistic view that would enlarge the capacities of the mind and broaden the horizon of knowledge. A particularly significant position in mid-Eighteenth-Century thought was held by Watts, whose early admiration for Locke, recorded in an occasional poem⁸⁷ and an ode upon Locke's death,⁸⁸ did not extend, however, to a complete acceptance of his philosophy. "His

86. *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Green and Grose, I, 150-1.

87. "To Mr. John Lock Retired from the World of Business": *Horæ Lyricæ*, London, 1706, pp. 117-18.

88. "To John Shute, Esq.; on Mr. Lock's Dangerous Sickness": *Horæ Lyricæ*, London, 1709, pp. 166-7. See also p. xxvi.

Essay on the Human Understanding," Watts said, "has diffused fairer Light through the World in numerous Affairs of Science and of Human Life. There are many admirable Chapters in that Book, and many Truths in them, which are worthy of Letters of Gold. But there are some Opinions in his Philosophy, especially relating to *Intellectual Beings*, their Powers and Operations, which have not gained my Assent."⁸⁹ By following Locke's methods of examining the mind and at the same time enlarging human knowledge, Watts could write a book of *Logick*⁹⁰ that was at once welcomed in both universities.⁹¹ Locke's *Essay*, moderated and softened, also laid the foundation for his *Philosophical Essays*, which became one of the most popular works of the day.⁹² Just as this worthy and accomplished divine made mild the *Psalms* in his translations, so he tempered Locke's severe philosophy to suit the more tender dispositions of his age.

At the opposite extreme we find that other party described by Hume who were persuaded of the meanness of human nature, and hence would not be satisfied until the process of limiting the understanding, begun in Locke's *Essay*, had been carried to completion. Of this number were Swift, Mandeville, Pope, and Bolingbroke, and one is tempted to include Gibbon and Paine though that might be unfair. Though Bolingbroke said he would proceed with Locke's assistance to analyze "the nature, extent, and reality of human knowledge,"⁹³ he arrived at conclusions which may be considered degrading to humanity. Similarly, the frequency with which Pope mentions Locke with respect and praise⁹⁴ might lead one to suppose that the philosophy of the *Essay on Man* is that of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, when actually Pope's system is derived by placing upon man mental disabilities never suggested by Locke. Because he entertained such a low opinion of man's nature and intellectual capacities, the title of "Lord High Bogy-man" has been accorded to

89. *Philosophical Essays*, Preface.

90. This work was published in 1725.

91. Watts, *Improvement of the Mind*, Introduction: ed. 1741, p. 5.

92. H. O. Christophersen, "Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke," p. 108.

93. *Works*, III, 361.

94. *Moral Essays*, IV, 139-40.

Dunciad, II, Pope's note to line 140.

Works, ed. Whitwell Elwin and W. J. Courthope, 10 vols., London, 1871-89, II, 396, n. 1, for lines added to *Essay on Man* after line 262 of Book II.

Mandeville,⁹⁵ with Swift certainly a very close rival. If the debasement of the human mind in the hands of this almost satanic group could in any way be made visible, it would appear perhaps the most spectacular phenomenon of the Eighteenth Century.

But between these extremes of light and dark stands a large body of writers who, favouring neither omniscience nor nescience, saw no reason for elevating or lowering man's intellectual capacities from the level of common sense established in Locke's *Essay*. A most worthy disciple of Locke is James Thomson, who would spend the long winter evenings studying that philosophy⁹⁶ he has celebrated in *Summer*⁹⁷ and *Autumn*.⁹⁸ Chesterfield belongs definitely in this group, and perhaps Richardson, since his approval of Locke is attested by his use in *Pamela* of the *Thoughts concerning Education*. Yet *Pamela*, commonly called the first psychological novel in English literature, was apparently written in ignorance of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, which contained the most popular psychology of the century. The Latin versification of the *Essay* places Gray firmly in the tradition of Locke, who also was the only modern philosopher valued by Fielding.⁹⁹ Near the end of his life Fielding put to good advantage the three volume set of Locke's *Works* the publisher Millar had presented him in 1751,¹⁰⁰ when he endeavoured to expose the fallacies of Bolingbroke's philosophy.¹⁰¹ In this piece of writing, "the most difficult . . . he had ever undertaken,"¹⁰² among the accusations brought against Bolingbroke is the charge that he misquoted Locke, thereby doing violence to the expression of "this truly great man."¹⁰³ Goldsmith frequently expresses equal admiration for Locke,¹⁰⁴ while Johnson, who professed that metaphysics was his

95. Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, ed. F. B. Kaye, 2 vols., Oxford, 1924, I, cxvi.

96. *Winter*, 572 ff.

97. *Summer*, 1730 ff.

98. *Autumn*, 1004 ff.

99. W. L. Cross, *History of Henry Fielding*, 3 vols., New Haven, 1918, III, 79.

100. *Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 1. This set of Locke was in Fielding's library at the time of his death (E. M. Thornbury, *Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic*, Madison, 1931, p. 183).

101. Fielding, "Fragment of a Comment on Lord Bolingbroke's Essays": *Works*, ed. J. P. Browne, 11 vols., London, 1902-03, X, (325)-39.

102. W. L. Cross, *History of Henry Fielding*, III, 17.

103. Fielding, *Works*, ed. Browne, X, 337.

104. Goldsmith, *Works*, ed. Gibbs, III, 162; IV, 125.

favourite study,¹⁰⁵ must have been immediately attracted both by Locke's common sense and by the excellence of his Christian character. But the most industrious of all Locke's literary apostles in the Eighteenth Century was Laurence Sterne, whose use of the *Essay* is perhaps literature's finest tribute to philosophy. "On one occasion, Suard asked Sterne to explain his extraordinary personality—a temperament really stable and yet volatile to all appearance." With unusual seriousness Yorick replied that whatever in his character might not be attributed to nature could be accounted for by

certain acquired traits affecting mind and style, which had come from "the daily reading of the Old and New Testaments, books which were to his liking as well as necessary to his profession"; and from a prolonged study of Locke, "which he had begun in youth and continued through life." Anyone, he told Suard, who was acquainted with Locke might discover the philosopher's directing hand "in all his pages, in all his lines, in all his expressions."¹⁰⁶

105. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill and L. F. Powell, 6 vols., Oxford, 1934—, I, 70.

106. Quoted in W. L. Cross, *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, 3rd ed., New Haven, 1929, pp. 301–02, from D-J. Garat, *Mémoires Historiques sur le XVIII^e. Siècle, et sur M. Suard*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., Paris, 1821, II, 149.

BOOK I

Neither Principles nor Ideas are Innate

THE first book of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* undertakes to prove that man is born without any innate principles or ideas, and enters this world ignorant of everything. Although Locke professes that in the entire *Essay* he works merely "as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge,"¹ he is particularly active in this employment in the first of the four books, which throws aside innate principles and ideas and makes room for "those foundations which . . . are the only true ones, whereon to establish those notions we can have of our own knowledge."² Experience is later shown to be the origin for all ideas, and for those as well which had been thought by Descartes and others to have been "*nées avec moi.*"³ The conflicting philosophical theories are precisely described by Voltaire. Descartes, he says, believed that "the Soul, at its coming into the Body, is inform'd with the whole Series of metaphysical Notions; knowing God, infinite Space, possessing all abstract Ideas; in a Word, completely endued with the most sublime Lights, which it unhappily forgets at its issuing from the Womb." But, with regard to himself, Voltaire boasted that he was as little inclined as Mr. Locke "to fancy that some Weeks after I was conceiv'd, I was a very learned Soul; knowing at that Time a thousand Things which I forgot at my Birth; and possessing when in the Womb, (tho' to no Manner of Purpose,) Knowledge which I lost the Instant I had occasion for it; and which I have never since been able to recover perfectly."⁴

This denial of innate ideas, thoroughly consistent with the apparent rationalism of Locke's philosophy, serves to banish much mystery from the mind of man and tends to break human contact and fa-

1. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 14.

2. *Essay*, I, iii, 26.

3. Quoted in Locke, *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, (37), n. 1.

4. *Letters concerning the English Nation*, London, 1733, pp. 97–100 *passim*. Letter 13.

miliarity with the spiritual world. Further, it definitely questions God's benevolence and kindness even though Locke may affirm that

the goodness of God hath not been wanting to men, without such original impressions of knowledge or ideas stamped on the mind; since he hath furnished man with those faculties which will serve for the sufficient discovery of all things requisite to the end of such a being; and I doubt not but to show, that a man, by the right use of his natural abilities, may, without any innate principles, attain a knowledge of a God, and other things that concern him.⁵

Shorn of innate ideas, a man, however, appears less perfect, less the image of his Creator, and thus an obvious inclination among certain writers who followed Locke to debase man and lower his already fallen state may have been assisted by the conclusions of the first book of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Finally, if we will agree that the hypothesis of innate ideas "has waxed or waned, as the spiritual or the sensuous was most developed in the consciousness of the philosopher or of the age,"⁶ the denial of such ideas favours the material and sensuous world.

Because of these implications it is not surprising that Locke's attack on innate ideas involved him in an extensive religious controversy, the progress of which may now be conveniently surveyed in Mr. H. O. Christoffersen's recent *Bibliographical Introduction to the Study of John Locke*. Locke's position after the publication of the *Essay* may be compared, not too seriously, to that of the dramatist in *Candide* who is criticized because he "does not know a word of Arabic, yet the scene is in Arabia; moreover he is a man that does not believe in innate ideas; and I will bring you, to-morrow, twenty pamphlets written against him."⁷ Innate ideas have a literary as well as a religious significance for the Eighteenth Century, although the literary importance of this hypothesis may be more apparent in the writings of other periods, such as Vaughan's and Wordsworth's. The literature immediately following Locke, however, abounds with notions of the mind as a *tabula rasa*, with democratic conceptions of mental equality, and with the idea of ruling passions, each of which

5. *Essay*, I, iii, 12.

7. Voltaire, *Candide*, cap. 22.

6. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, (37), n. 2.

owes its rise in part to Locke's denial of innate ideas. A consideration of his treatment of this theory may therefore be useful.

The *Essay concerning Human Understanding* begins with this sentence:

It is an established opinion amongst some men, that there are in the understanding certain *innate principles*; some primary notions, κοινῶναι, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man; which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it.⁸

Locke begins his attack by stating two fundamental speculative principles which we all might think innate, namely, "Whatsoever is, is," and "It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be." His chief argument that these principles are not present in the mind from birth is not more abstruse than that such ideas are not to be found in the understandings of children and savages. Other more difficult proofs, to be sure, support this principal contention, but, though they may be philosophically more significant, they have not the engaging human interest of the argument that depends upon the observation of the minds of children, idiots, and savages. Locke's reasoning from the mind in its simplest forms must have made Pope realize that

The exactest traits of body or of mind,
We owe to models of an humble kind.⁹

The *Essay* asserts that

children, idiots, savages, and illiterate people, being of all others the least corrupted by custom, or borrowed opinions; learning and education having not cast their native thoughts into new moulds; nor by superinducing foreign and studied doctrines, confounded those fair characters nature had written there; one might reasonably imagine that in *their* minds these innate notions should lie open fairly to every one's view, as it is certain the thoughts of children do. It might very well be expected that these principles should be perfectly known to naturals; which being stamped immediately on the soul, (as these men suppose,) can have no dependence on the constitution or organs of the body, the only confessed difference between them and others. One would think, according to these men's principles, that all these native beams of light (were there any such) should, in those who have no reserves, no arts of concealment, shine out in their full lustre,

8. *Essay*, I, i, 1.

9. *Moral Essays*, II, 191-2.

and leave us in no more doubt of their being there, than we are of their love of pleasure and abhorrence of pain. But alas, amongst children, idiots, savages, and the grossly illiterate, what general maxims are to be found? what universal principles of knowledge? Their notions are few and narrow, borrowed only from those objects they have had most to do with, and which have made upon their senses the frequentest and strongest impressions. A child knows his nurse and his cradle, and by degrees the playthings of a little more advanced age; and a young savage has, perhaps, his head filled with love and hunting, according to the fashion of his tribe. But he that from a child untaught, or a wild inhabitant of the woods, will expect these abstract maxims and reputed principles of science, will, I fear, find himself mistaken. Such kind of general propositions are seldom mentioned in the huts of Indians: much less are they to be found in the thoughts of children, or any impressions of them on the minds of naturals.¹⁰

To this long passage let us add but a few more of Locke's interesting comments on children.

The child certainly knows, that the nurse that feeds it is neither the cat it plays with, nor the blackmoor it is afraid of: that the wormseed or mustard it refuses, is not the apple or sugar it cries for: this it is certainly and undoubtedly assured of: but will any one say, it is by virtue of this principle, "That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be," that it so firmly assents to these and other parts of its knowledge? Or that the child has any notion or apprehension of that proposition at an age, wherein yet, it is plain, it knows a great many other truths? He that will say, children join in these general abstract speculations with their sucking-bottles and their rattles, may perhaps, with justice, be thought to have more passion and zeal for his opinion, but less sincerity and truth, than one of that age.¹¹

Children are perhaps not alone in their ignorance of these speculative principles, whose innateness could be of vital concern only to mathematicians since it would imply that all mathematical demonstrations are native impressions on the mind. "And few mathematicians," Locke says, "will be forward to believe, that all the diagrams they have drawn were but copies of those innate characters which nature had engraven upon their minds."¹² Isaac Watts, however, does con-

10. *Essay*, I, i, 27.

12. *Essay*, I, i, 22.

11. *Essay*, I, i, 25.

test the arguments in this chapter of the *Essay*, disagreeing with Locke on the ground that, while axioms may not be stamped on the mind, nevertheless God has so formed the human mind that it must judge according to such axioms as "Whatsoever acteth hath a Being." Therefore Watts concludes:

I take the Mind or Soul of Man not to be so perfectly indifferent to receive all Impressions, as a *Rasa Tabula*, or *white paper*; and 'tis so framed by its Maker as not to be equally disposed to all sorts of Perceptions, nor to embrace all Propositions, with an Indifferency to judge them true or false; but that antecedently to all the Effects of Custom, Experience, Education, or any other contingent Causes, as the Mind is necessarily ordained and limited by its Creator to have such and such appointed Sensations or Ideas raised in it by certain external Motions of the Matter or Body to which it is united, and that while the Organs are good and sound it cannot have others, so 'tis also inclined and almost determined by such Principles as are wrought into it by the Creator, to believe some Propositions true, others false; and perhaps also some Actions good, others evil.¹³

A remark of Gibbon is interesting in connection with this discussion of speculative principles, those axioms which seem so true that we might imagine they were always the possession of the mind. "As soon," he writes in the *Memoirs*, "as the use of speech had prepared my infant reason for the admission of knowledge, I was taught the arts of reading, writing, and arithmetic. So remote is the date, so vague is the memory of their origin in myself, that, were not the error corrected by analogy, I should be tempted to conceive them as innate."¹⁴ Into Gibbon's account of his education may be read the mild cynicism of one who feels that perhaps the Creator has been a little unkind in obliging man to earn his own intellectual living. On the other hand, Eighteenth-Century thinkers might consider themselves self-made intellectually, as did Gibbon, and pride themselves accordingly in their accomplishments.

Innate practical principles, by which are meant such moral rules as truth and justice, are the subject of the second and third chapters of this first book of the *Essay*. Locke's proof that there is no one moral rule which is actually engraven on the mind of man possibly explains why Swift said that in the *Human Understanding*, "there are

13. *Philosophical Essays*, Essay IV, sec. 3.

14. *Memoirs*, ed. Hill, p. 31.

some dangerous tenets, as that of [no] innate ideas."¹⁵ If so, his statement is very temperate in comparison with Shaftesbury's undutiful observations upon his master's denial of innate moral truths.

'TWAS MR. LOCKE, that struck the home Blow: For MR. HOBSES'S Character and base slavish Principles in Government took off the Poyson of his Philosophy. 'TWAS MR. LOCKE that struck at all Fundamentals, threw all *Order* and *Virtue* out of the World, and made the very *Ideas* of these (which are the same as those of God) *unnatural*, and without Foundation in our Minds.¹⁶

Locke had no intention of throwing all virtue out of the world, but merely observed that the absence of the moral rules of justice, piety, equity, chastity and the like in several supposedly civilized countries gave certain proof that these principles were not innate in all men. It is with this in mind that he writes:

Robberies, murders, rapes, are the sports of men set at liberty from punishment and censure. Have there not been whole nations, and those of the most civilized people, amongst whom the exposing their children, and leaving them in the fields to perish by want or wild beasts has been the practice; as little condemned or scrupled as the begetting them? Do they not still, in some countries, put them into the same graves with their mothers, if they die in childbirth; or despatch them, if a pretended astrologer declares them to have unhappy stars? And are there not places where, at a certain age, they kill or expose their parents, without any remorse at all? In a part of Asia, the sick, when their case comes to be thought desperate, are carried out and laid on the earth before they are dead; and left there, exposed to wind and weather, to perish without assistance or pity.¹⁷

To fortify his contention that moral principles are not innate and have no universal consent, Locke presents a long series of the worst enormities practised among civilized nations, which he had gleaned from those books of travel that furnish numerous illustrations for the *Essay*. From the same sources he draws his evidence that these moral rules which enjoy no universal assent among civilized peoples,

15. *Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, III, 113-14.

16. *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University*, London, 1716. Letter of June 3, 1709.

17. *Essay*, I, ii, 9.

are also absent from the savage mind. After several illustrations of the moral baseness that may exist in primitive communities, he concludes:

When it shall be made out that men ignorant of words, or untaught by the laws and customs of their country, know that it is part of the worship of God, not to kill another man; not to know more women than one; not to procure abortion; not to expose their children; not to take from another what is his, though we want it ourselves, but on the contrary, relieve and supply his wants; and whenever we have done the contrary we ought to repent, be sorry, and resolve to do so no more;—when I say, all men shall be proved actually to know and allow all these and a thousand other such rules, all of which come under these two general words . . . *virtutes et peccata*, virtues and sins, there will be more reason for admitting these and the like, for common notions and practical principles.¹⁸

In the place of innate principles of this kind Locke substitutes a type of educated morality, for "moral principles require reasoning and discourse, and some exercise of the mind, to discover the certainty of their truth." To supply the child with these moral principles which are wanting in its mind at birth is the first and most important task of education, Locke maintains in his *Thoughts concerning Education*, which grew quite naturally out of his consideration of the young mind in the first book of the *Essay*.

It must have been disturbing in 1690 to read of Locke's denial of innate moral principles for that opinion placed him in the radical tradition of Hobbes, the terror of Malmesbury, whose well-known conviction that the state of nature is a state of war is equivalent to saying that man is born without any native moral principles to prevent him from preying upon his fellows. The more conservative Bacon obviously had maintained the doctrine of man's "primitive and original purity"¹⁹ which had been corrupted through no fault of the Creator but by the bad decisions of a free being in a garden of Eden. Mandeville, exaggerating Locke's dangerous position, contended in the *Fable of the Bees* that vices, not virtues, are innate, "that real Virtue requires a Conquest over untaught Nature."²⁰ This tri-

18. *Essay*, I, ii, 19.

19. *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning: Philosophical Works*, ed. J. M. Robertson, London, 1905, p. 632.

20. *Fable of the Bees*, ed. Kaye, II, 127.

umph of reason over nature, which Locke and any moral man who denies innate ideas must think possible, appeared to Mandeville to be impossible, and from an economic standpoint undesirable, for man's various innate vices are what cause him to demand many of the costly material objects produced by industry.²¹ Let virtue and goodness triumph, and trade and commerce would suffer. Therefore if we would have a prosperous hive, we should make no effort to be a good hive, but instead permit our selfish nature to demand the satisfying luxuries supplied by commerce. Fortunately the English heart rejected these intellectual economics by which wealth accumulates and men decay.

Voltaire, finding innate moral principles as incredible as Mandeville, ridicules this optimistic philosophy through the character of Pangloss who is naïve enough to believe in man's original goodness. Not without a good deal of common sense Dr. Pangloss argues:

It is more likely . . . mankind have a little corrupted nature, for they were not born wolves, and they have become wolves; God has given them neither cannon of four-and-twenty pounders, nor bayonets; and yet they have made cannon and bayonets to destroy one another.²²

Innate ideas are less successful in a later and no less amusing discussion in the same book, which Candide himself introduces by saying:

“Do you believe . . . that men have always massacred each other as they do to-day, that they have always been liars, cheats, traitors, ingrates, brigands, idiots, thieves, scoundrels, gluttons, drunkards, misers, envious, ambitious, bloody-minded, calumniators, debauchees, fanatics, hypocrites, and fools?”

“Do you believe,” said Martin, “that hawks have always eaten pigeons when they have found them?”

“Yes, without doubt,” said Candide.

“Well, then,” said Martin, “if hawks have always had the same character why should you imagine that men have changed theirs?”

“Oh!” said Candide, “there is a vast deal of difference, for free will—”²³

Candide's suggestion, which Voltaire does not give him time to develop, is of course the Christian assumption, held by Bacon, that man

21. *Fable of the Bees*, ed. Kaye, I, 355.

22. *Candide*, cap. 4.

23. *Ibid.*, cap. 21.

was born with a knowledge of what was right, but with freedom to do quite otherwise.

A denial of innate ideas was of course immediately acceptable in Mandeville's and Voltaire's scheme of things, but at the same time it formed a corner-stone of the philosophical thought of such orthodox Christian philosophers as Bishops Berkeley and Butler and Dr. Johnson. It was not a faith in the innate moral goodness of man which led Bishop Berkeley to undertake the founding of a college in the Bermudas whence Christian principles might radiate over the American continent. Rather Berkeley thought that "no part of the Gentile world are so inhuman and barbarous as the savage Americans," their "chief employment and delight consisting in cruelty and revenge."²⁴ Dark Indian hearts needed the teaching of the moral truths which Berkeley hoped to bring them. Both Butler²⁵ and Johnson believed that virtue is not natural to man, and in consequence both emphasized the possibility and necessity of developing a rational morality of principles to make up for the want of an instinctive morality. Typical of Johnson's conversation is the statement, "Pity is not natural to man. Children are always cruel. Savages are always cruel. Pity is acquired and improved by the cultivation of reason."²⁶ This opinion Johnson introduces into his criticism of Kames's *Sketches of the History of Man*, in which he says

it is maintained that virtue is natural to man, and that if we would but consult our own hearts we should be virtuous. Now after consulting our own hearts all we can, and with all the helps we have, we find how few of us are virtuous. This is saying a thing which all mankind know not to be true.²⁷

Goldsmith, though he does not often echo Johnson, is at one with him on the issue of innate moral principles when he remarks:

Observe the brown savage of Thibet . . . : rapine and cruelty are scarcely crimes in his eye; neither pity nor tenderness, which ennable every virtue,

24. *Proposal for a College in Bermuda: Works*, ed. A. C. Fraser, 4 vols., Oxford, 1901, IV, 361. See also *Siris*, sec. 308 ff.

25. *Analogy*, I, v, 15, 22.

26. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 437.

27. *Ibid.*, III, 352. See also I, 443; II, 198.

have any place in his heart; he hates his enemies, and kills those he subdues.²⁸

To the number of conservative thinkers of the middle of the century who followed Locke in denying innate ideas one may add, on the authority of Leslie Stephen, Law, Wesley, and Cowper.²⁹ The radical opinion of an earlier period thus became the conservative doctrine of a later.

While there was unquestionable judgment in Locke's conclusions that moral ideas are not imprinted on the mind but develop with a proper use of our mental faculties, nevertheless for the credence he gave to the testimony of books of travel as proof that no single moral idea is innate, he may deserve the criticism of Shaftesbury's sharp remark: "THEN comes the credulous Mr. LOCKE with his *Indian, Barbarian Stories* of wild Nations, that have no such Idea, (as Travellers, learned Authors! and Men of Truth! and great Philosophers! have inform'd him)."³⁰ Swift satirized generally the ridiculous faith all philosophers gave to details of peoples' habits as reported by travellers when he adds, after a minute description of some disagreeable details in the *Voyage to Brobdingnag*:

I hope the gentle reader will excuse me for dwelling on these and the like particulars, which however insignificant they may appear to grovelling vulgar minds, yet will certainly help a philosopher to enlarge his thoughts and imagination, and apply them to the benefit of public as well as private life, which was my sole design in presenting this and other accounts of my travels to the world.³¹

The third and final group of principles whose innateness is questioned by Locke includes those relating to God. Lord Herbert of Cherbury had given as the first two of five propositions which he considered to be engraven on man's mind: 1. *Esse aliquod supremum numen*; 2. *Numen illud coli debere*.³² But the truth that "God is to

28. *Citizen of the World*, Letter 11.

29. *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols., New York, 1927, I, 161; II, 419–20, 454.

30. *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University*, Letter of June 3, 1709.

31. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, 96.

32. *Essay*, I, ii, 15.

be worshipped" cannot be an innate idea, Locke argues, because children have no conception of the meaning of worship. There is a passage in Dryden's *Discourse concerning Satire*, that appeared in 1692, two years after Locke's *Essay*, which seems to imply that worship is not innate. In describing certain Grecian customs Dryden wrote:

Festivals and holidays soon succeeded to private worship, and we need not doubt but they were enjoin'd by the true God to his own people, as they were afterwards imitated by the heathens; who, by the light of reason, knew they were to invoke some superior being in their necessities, and to thank him for his benefits.³³

The true meaning of the passage hinges upon the interpretation given to the word "reason"; if Dryden meant that worship was not instinctive in all men and came to the heathen only with the light of reason, he must be credited with a philosophical opinion more advanced than many he propounded. Addison, who was one of the most faithful of all Locke's disciples in literature, raises this problem of worship in an issue of the *Spectator* only to avoid it by refusing to state whether man's propensity to devotion is a "tradition from some first Founder of mankind, or that it is conformable to the natural light of reason, or that it proceeds from an instinct implanted in the soul itself."³⁴ Although Addison hesitated to answer this question, it is to his credit as a philosopher that the problem of the origin of worship in man's mind once came to his attention.

To prove that the idea of a Deity as well as that of worship is not imprinted on every man's mind, Locke returns to the argument he had used against innate moral principles, namely, that the idea of a God is not the possession of all people, civilized and savage. Speaking again from the information of those maligned books of travel, he says:

Hath not navigation discovered, in these later ages, whole nations, at the bay of Soldania, in Brazil, in Boranday, and in the Caribbee islands, &c., amongst whom there was to be found no notion of a God, no religion? Nicholaus del Techo, in *Literis ex Paraquaria, de Caiguarum Conversione*, has these words: *Reperi eam gentem nullum nomen habere quod Deum, et hominis animam significet; nulla sacra habet, nulla idola.* These

33. *Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 294.

34. *Spectator*, No. 201.

are instances of nations where uncultivated nature has been left to itself, without the help of letters and discipline, and the improvements of arts and sciences.³⁵

If God had struck the idea of Himself upon all human minds, it would be impossible for any people to be without a knowledge of Him. It is not surprising, Locke continues, to find the Siamites wanting a notion of God, but even among civilized nations this idea has not universal assent, as evidenced by the case of China where "the *literari*, or learned, keeping to the old religion of China, and the ruling party there, are all of them atheists."³⁶ Locke supplements his argument against the assumption of an innate idea of God by calling attention to the variety of conceptions of the Deity existing among men,³⁷ and to the gross, low, and often pitiful notions of God entertained by some people,³⁸ circumstances which would not be possible had God imprinted upon the minds of all men a distinct idea of Himself. He concludes therefore

that the truest and best notions men have of God were not imprinted, but acquired by thought and meditation, and a right use of their faculties: since the wise and considerate men of the world, by a right and careful employment of their thoughts and reason, attained true notions in this as well as other things.³⁹

If we do use our faculties well, Locke assures us that we shall have as certain knowledge that there is a God "as that the opposite angles made by the intersection of two straight lines are equal."⁴⁰

The number of the *Spectator* for Tuesday, May 27, 1712, written by Budgell, is given over to an attack upon atheism, and the first argument urged against atheists is "that the greatest and most eminent persons of all ages have been against them."⁴¹ Among these great persons, along with Plato, Cicero, Bacon, and Boyle, Locke is also mentioned. Although the writer was correct in asserting that Locke was intolerant of atheism, it is hardly consistent that later in the article he should suggest that the idea of God is possibly "innate and coexistent with the mind itself," a supposition Locke would

35. *Essay*, I, iii, 8.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Essay*, I, iii, 14.

38. *Essay*, I, iii, 15, 17.

39. *Essay*, I, iii, 16.

40. *Essay*, I, iii, 17.

41. *Spectator*, No. 389.

never allow. This same paper reveals, moreover, how elements in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* were being misapplied by the unscrupulous, for the writer states that men, eager to prove the non-existence of God, have been delighted to discover a people like the Hottentots, who have no idea of a Deity. Locke himself had mentioned the Hottentots,⁴² but he employed the evidence that some nations were without a notion of God to demonstrate merely that the idea of God, whose existence is unquestioned, is not innate.

The same year of this paper of the *Spectator*, 1712, Blackmore published his *Creation*, a philosophical poem whose inspiration certainly lies in the paragraphs of Locke's *Essay* that deny an innate idea of God. This is evident in the very first sentence of the Preface, which reads:

It has been the Opinion of many Persons of great Sense and Learning, that the Knowledge of a God, as well as some other self-evident and uncontested Notions, is born with us, and Exists antecedent to any Perception or Operation of the Mind.⁴³

As an example of such a person of good sense and great learning holding this opinion he might have named John Donne, who preached that "The soul of man brings with it, into the body, a sense and an acknowledgment of God; neither can all the abuses that the body puts upon the soul, whilst they dwell together, (which are infinite) divest that acknowledgment, or extinguish that sense of God in the soul."⁴⁴ But Blackmore confesses his own "Inability to conceive this inbred Knowledge, these Original independent Ideas, that owe not their Being to the Operation of the Understanding, but are . . . Congenite and Co-existent with it," and in this opinion which he had entertained for many years he was, he says, "afterwards confirm'd by the famous Author of the *Essay of human Understanding*."⁴⁵ The seven books of *Creation* endeavour in progressive stages to prove the existence of a Divine Mind by a candid examination of the nature of the universe and man, without the help of any innate ideas. This philosophical epic is therefore a very well defined, if not popular, example of an aspect of Locke's influence.

42. *Essay*, I, iii, 12.

43. *Creation*, London, 1712, p. (i).

44. Donne, *Works*, ed. Henry Alford, 6 vols., London, 1839, II, 349.

45. *Creation*, pp. ii, iii.

Innate ideas are further important in Eighteenth-Century literature because there arose out of Locke's denial of such, several notions concerning the mind that received almost universal attention. The infant mind, if it has not been stored at birth with ideas of speculation, morality, and God, resembles a *tabula rasa*. Locke, who makes this supposition the basis of his philosophy, has a variety of terms for describing the blank state of the mind as it enters the world, first picturing it as an "empty cabinet."

The senses at first let in *particular* ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet, and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards, the mind proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the *materials* about which to exercise its discursive faculty.⁴⁶

But he changes the simile frequently, likening the young mind now to a "white paper," devoid of any characters,⁴⁷ and again to a "dark room." "For, methinks, the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas of things without."⁴⁸ These various expressions have no special consequence, since each implies the same fundamental notion that the mind brings no ideas with it at birth.⁴⁹

The theory of the *tabula rasa* has always been associated chiefly with Locke, and rightly, for it is fundamental in his philosophy. Although the *Essay* popularized the phrase, the *tabula rasa* itself is to be found in the writings of Aristotle, and has reappeared in one form or another all through the ages.⁵⁰ Locke may have noted a similar expression in the "judicious" Hooker's *Ecclesiasticall Politie* (1594), where the soul of man is described "*as a book wherein nothing is, and yet all things may be imprinted.*"⁵¹ An Elizabethan poem,

46. *Essay*, I, i, 15.

47. *Essay*, I, ii, 22. See also II, i, 2.

48. *Essay*, II, xi, 17.

49. Cf. John Clarke, *Essay upon the Education of Youth*, 3rd ed., London, 1740, p. 2: "Sensible Objects . . . must store the yet empty Cabinet of the Mind with Variety of Ideas, as the Foundation and Materials of their future Knowledge."

50. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 48, n. 1.

51. Quoted in Locke, *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 48, n. 1. Book I, sec. 6 of the *Ecclesiasticall Politie*, in which this expression occurs, is cited in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, IV, xvii, 7.

attributed to Donne but probably written by Sir John Roe, offers a parallel passage.

The mind, you know is like a Table-book,
Which, th'old unwipt, new writing never took.⁵²

The "white paper" simile occurs in John Earle's character of "A Childe," in which the young soul is likened to "a white paper vnscribed with obseruations of the world, wherewith at length it becomes a blurr'd Note-booke."⁵³ Even restoration drama provides an example of a *tabula rasa* from Sir Robert Howard's play, *The Vestal Virgin, Or, The Roman Ladies*.

Mind's like smooth Paper never writ upon,
When folded up, by some Impression,
Marks will remain it never had before,
And ne'er return to former smoothness more.⁵⁴

The theory of the *tabula rasa* in various forms was apparently common, but its unusual popularity in the literature of the age following Locke may well be attributed to his influence. Dryden's poem, "Eleonora," written two years after the appearance of the *Essay*, compares the mind to "wax" in the passage on the education of the lady's child.

At his first aptness, the maternal love
Those rudiments of reason did improve.
The tender age was pliant to command;
Like wax it yielded to the forming hand.⁵⁵

Surely the most artistic of the later interpretations of this idea is Leibniz's figure of "une pierre de marbre *qui a des veines* plutôt que d'une pierre de marbre tout unie ou de tablettes *vides*, c'est-à-dire de ce qui s'appelle *tabula rasa* chez les philosophes."⁵⁶ Swift enlivened the notion with some freshness and spirit when he wrote:

52. Donne, *Poems*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, 2 vols., Oxford, 1912, I, 404.

53. John Earle, *Micro-Cosmographie*, ed. Edward Arber, London, 1869, p. (21).

54. Act III, sc. i.

55. "Eleonora," 218-21.

56. Quoted in Locke, *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 48, n. 1. Leibniz's simile, however, implies innate ideas.

The mind of man is at first (if you will pardon the expression) like a *tabula rasa*, or like wax, which, while it is soft, is capable of any impression, till time has hardened it. And at length death, that grim tyrant, stops us in the midst of our career. The greatest conquerors have at last been conquered by death, which spares none, from the sceptre to the spade.

*Mors omnibus communis.*⁵⁷

To see again how a drab philosophical proposition can assume warmth and life when it emerges in literature, let one observe the references to the *tabula rasa* in the letters of Pamela, who acquired her knowledge about the minds of children by reading Locke's *Thoughts concerning Education*, presented to her by Mr. B. In imitation of Locke she compiled her own list of rules to be followed during the first years of the child's life when "the little buds of their minds will begin to open, and their watchful mamma will be employed, like a skilful gardener, in assisting and encouraging the charming flower, through its several hopeful stages, to perfection."⁵⁸ For the simile of the flower she substitutes another in recommending that parents be careful not to "indulge their children in bad habits, and give them their head, at a time when, like wax, their tender minds may be moulded into what shape they please."⁵⁹

Other contemporary references are frequent in which the notion of the *tabula rasa* is intended, though none of the familiar figures are employed. An instance is in Blackmore's *Creation*.

When Man with Reason dignify'd is born,
No Images his naked Mind adorn:
No Sciences or Arts enrich his Brain,
Nor Fancy yet displays her pictur'd Train.
He no Innate Ideas can discern,
Of Knowledge destitute, tho' apt to learn.⁶⁰

The mind would remain destitute of knowledge, Bolingbroke explains, if experience and sensation did not furnish it with ideas.

57. *Critical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, 295.

58. Richardson, *Pamela*, Letter 90: *Works*, ed. Leslie Stephen, 12 vols., London, 1883-4, III, 297.

59. *Ibid.*, Letter 95: *Works*, ed. Stephen, III, 330.

60. *Creation*, VII, 228-33.

A jog, a knock, a thrust from without is not knowledge. No. But, if we did not perceive these jogs, knocks, and thrusts from without, we should remain as we came into the world, void even of the first elements of knowledge.⁶¹

The total emptiness of the infant mind is again represented in the following four lines of the *Anti-Lucretius*.

The figures, which must actuate her, remain
As yet quite uncollected in the brain;
Exterior objects have not furnish'd yet
Th' ideal stores which Age is sure to get.⁶²

The phrase, "the rude uninformed mind of a girl,"⁶³ drops casually into a conversation in *Tom Jones*, while a similar expression, "a raw unprincipled boy," enters a discussion of education in Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*.⁶⁴

Gray wrote the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" on the assumption that children are as ignorant as the *tabula rasa* theory would imply.

Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies,
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more; where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

So with sympathy he leaves the young lads of Eton to chase their hoops and play ball, not knowing their doom. It is of course rational to suppose that a man might consider children ignorant without ever weighing the problem of innate ideas or giving a thought to a *tabula rasa*. But it is evident that the conception in this particular poem has its foundation in Locke's philosophy. Gray's longest poetic writing consists of fragments of a didactic poem in Latin, *De Principiis Cogitandi*, written in 1740 and 1742,⁶⁵ and designed to put in verse form

61. *Works*, III, 364.

62. Cardinal de Polignac, *Anti-Lucretius*, trans. George Canning, London, 1766, p. 401.

63. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. VI, cap. 2: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 296.

64. *Man of Feeling*, cap. 21: ed. London, 1771, p. 77.

65. *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, 185, Editor's note.

the philosophy of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. His purpose is thus announced:

UNDE Animus scire incipiat; . . .
 Ratio unde rudi sub pectore tardum
 Augeat imperium; et primum mortalibus ægris
 Ira, Dolor, Metus, et Curæ nascantur inanes,
 Hinc canere aggredior.⁶⁶

Gray will explain how knowledge and reason develop in the rude, uninformed mind, bringing with them ideas of Anger, Sorrow, Fear, and Care. Observe then how these same four passions reappear together in a single stanza of the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" that enumerates those things which the youth of Eton must later experience.

These shall the fury Passions tear,
 The vulturs of the mind,
 Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
 And Shame that sculks behind;
 Or pineing Love shall waste their youth,
 Or Jealousy with rankling tooth,
 That inly gnaws the secret heart,
 And Envy wan, and faded Care,
 Grim-visag'd comfortless Despair,
 And Sorrow's piercing dart.

In writing this ode Gray must have recalled the philosophy of the earlier *De Principiis Cogitandi*, and the ignorance of children which he names bliss must resemble that very ignorance in which Locke believed men to be born.

The assumption that the child's mind is a *tabula rasa* places an immense responsibility upon education since all ideas can be acquired only by experience, or, in other words, by learning. Locke's own *Thoughts concerning Education*, published shortly after the *Essay*, illustrates the importance education immediately assumes in consequence of his philosophy. Martinus Scriblerus is perhaps the first child in English literature to be brought up with studied care for the development of his mind. So concerned were his peculiar parents for

66. *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, 185.

the cultivation of his intellect that they raised him on butter and honey since beef, fed to the young, was supposed to spoil the understanding.⁶⁷ This amusing regulation is an excellent commentary upon an age that had become conscious that the mind could be elevated from natal ignorance to knowledge only by the most careful cultivation. Tristram Shandy was doomed from birth to be in misery because his father, realizing the necessity of education, had therefore investigated the problem so thoroughly that he reckoned it

one of the greatest calamities which ever befel the republic of letters, That those who have been entrusted with the education of our children, and whose business it was to open their minds, and stock them early with ideas, in order to set the imagination loose upon them, have made so little use of the auxiliary verbs in doing it, as they have done.⁶⁸

Mr. Shandy conceived that a series of auxiliary verbs set loose in a child's mind among a multitude of incoming ideas, would at once combine them into a number of thoughts that would increase by a geometric ratio. Pamela was a better parent than Mr. Shandy. Not schooled as was Tristram's father in the intricate suggestions of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, she had read simply Locke's *Thoughts concerning Education* and had discussed the philosopher's opinions with Mr. B. Her notions concerning the child's mind are therefore simple and clear, and the task of bringing up her seven offspring was not the burden which a single child had imposed upon Mr. Shandy. Filled with the pleasure of shaping the young plastic mind, she exclaims:

What delights have those mammas (which some fashionable ladies are quite unacquainted with) who can make their dear babies, and their first educations, their entertainment and diversion! To watch the dawnings of reason in them, to direct their little passions, as they show themselves, to this or that particular point of benefit and use; and to prepare the sweet virgin soil of their minds to receive the seeds of virtue and goodness so early, that, as they grow up, one need only now a little pruning, and now a little watering, to make them the ornaments and delights of the garden of this life!⁶⁹

67. Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 291-2.

68. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, bk. V, cap. 42: ed. Cross, p. 326.

69. Richardson, *Pamela*, Letter 95: *Works*, ed. Stephen, III, 336-7.

For Miss Catharine Porten, Gibbon's devoted aunt, it was, the historian tells us, "her delight and reward to observe the first shoots of my young ideas."⁷⁰ Here Gibbon is echoing surely that famous passage of Thomson's *Spring* in which the poet describes the pleasure parents find in watching the development of their children's minds, when

. . . infant reason grows apace, and calls
For the kind hand of an assiduous care.
Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
To teach the young idea how to shoot,
To pour the fresh instruction o'er the mind,
To breathe the enlivening spirit, and to fix
The generous purpose in the glowing breast.⁷¹

It is part of the tradition that a line from this purely Lockian passage in Thomson should have been included in the Advertisement to Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son*.

The instructions scattered throughout those Letters [the earliest ones], are happily calculated,

"To teach the young idea how to shoot;"

To form and enlighten the infant mind, upon its first opening, and prepare it to receive the early impressions of learning, and of morality.⁷²

Few people have devoted the care and attention to the education of a child that Chesterfield bestowed upon his son, and his motive lay, I

70. *Memoirs*, ed. Hill, pp. 37-8.

71. *Spring*, 1150-6.

72. Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son*, 2nd ed., 4 vols., London, 1774, I, xi.

See J. E. V. Crofts, "Enthusiasm," *Eighteenth Century Literature: An Oxford Miscellany*, Oxford, 1909, pp. 147-8. The writer, asserting that Hervey's *Meditations* influenced Cowper, says: "There is, at least, one verbal reminiscence in *The Task*. Hervey, comparing education to gardening, says:—'Let a holy discipline clear the soil; let sacred instructions sow it with the best seed. Let Skill and Vigilance dress the rising shoots; direct the young ideas how to spread.' This must have produced the notorious line:—

"To teach the young idea how to shoot.' "

Although the sources are probably confused, it is interesting to discover further repetitions of this conception. Thomson's popular verse is quoted in Boswell's *Life of Johnson* when the author is discussing Johnson's talents for teaching. "While we acknowledge," he says, "the justness of Thomson's beautiful remark,

"Delightful task! to rear the tender thought,
And teach the young idea how to shoot!"

we must consider that this delight is perceptible only by 'a mind at ease,' a mind at once calm and clear" (*Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 98).

believe, in Locke's interpretation of the human mind. No one was more serious than Chesterfield in his recognition of the implications of the *tabula rasa* theory, that birth is irrelevant, and that knowledge can be acquired only by experience and learning. Consequently he writes to his boy:

I am apt to flatter myself, that my experience, at the latter end of my life, may be of use to you, at the beginning of yours; and I do not grudge the greatest trouble, if it can procure you the least advantage. I even repeat frequently the same things, the better to imprint them on your young, and, I suppose, yet giddy mind; and I shall think that part of my time the best employed, that contributes to make you employ yours well.⁷³

This new stress on the education of the young apparent in the literature and life of the Eighteenth Century may well have been the result of Locke's philosophy which had cast aside innate ideas and made experience requisite for all knowledge.

In 1740 Mr. B presented Pamela with a copy of Locke's *Thoughts concerning Education*, and eight years later Chesterfield sent a copy to his son with the important passages marked to show him what "a very wise, philosophical, and retired man, thinks."⁷⁴ The century offers no stranger marriage of spirits than that of Richardson and Chesterfield, printer and peer, thus united by Locke's notions concerning the common mind of man. It suggests the truth that this philosophy was a levelling force and fostered intellectual democracy. The process of equalization begins, it appears, with the denial of innate ideas.

Locke probably did not believe that all men possess when born equal intellectual possibilities, but his opinion cannot be determined from the following passage which is practically his only consideration of this problem in the *Essay*:

that there is such a difference between men, in respect of their understandings, I think nobody, who has had any conversation with his neighbours, will question: though he never was at Westminster-Hall or the Exchange on the one hand, nor at Alms-houses or Bedlam on the other. Which great difference in men's intellects, whether it rises from any defect in the organs of the body, particularly adapted to thinking; or in

73. *Letters to His Son*, II, 174. Letter 151.

74. *Ibid.*, II, 103. Letter 136.

the dulness or untractableness of those faculties for want of use; or, as some think, in the natural differences of men's souls themselves; or some, or all of these together; it matters not here to examine: only this is evident, that there is a difference of degrees in men's understandings, apprehensions, and reasonings, to so great a latitude, that one may, without doing injury to mankind, affirm, that there is a greater distance between some men and others in this respect, than between some men and some beasts.⁷⁵

And yet Locke adds again, "How this comes about is a speculation, though of great consequence, yet not necessary to our present purpose."⁷⁶ The speculation is nowhere considered in the *Essay*, and the mind whose operations Locke endeavours to fathom is the common human mind, which he does not define but assumes to be the possession of the great part of mankind. Although he recognized the vast differences that may develop between the understandings of men, his philosophy furthers intellectual democracy by laying heavy taxes and restrictions upon all minds. To all minds it denies the advantage of innate ideas, and taxes them additionally by greatly limiting the amount of knowledge that may be attained. Also, by attaching prime importance to sensation for the acquisition of ideas, this philosophy emphasizes the five senses that are common to all men. In these ways, and others we shall mention later, Locke levels all human understandings.

It is not difficult to find in the literature of the period following the *Essay*, or of any period, statements of the obvious inequality of men's intellectual endowments. Such may be seen in the writings of Dryden,⁷⁷ Addison,⁷⁸ Watts,⁷⁹ Pope⁸⁰ and others. Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* assures us further that a natural difference of mental ability is also discoverable among horses for they like men are not all "born with equal talents of the mind, or a capacity to improve them."⁸¹ As an example of the conservative, sensible judgment of the day regarding the distribution of intellectual talents among humans, let us take the following passage from Goldsmith:

75. *Essay*, IV, xx, 5.

76. *Ibid.*

77. "To my dear Friend Mr. Congreve, on his Comedy Call'd *The Double Dealer*," 60.

78. *Spectator*, No. 417.

79. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 16: ed. 1741, pp. 236-7.

80. *Moral Essays*, I, 15-18.

81. *Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, 268.

We cannot agree in opinion with those who imagine, that nature has been equally favourable to all men, in conferring upon them a fundamental capacity, which may be improved to all the refinement of taste and criticism. Every day's experience convinces us of the contrary. Of two youths educated under the same preceptor, instructed with the same care, and cultivated with the same assiduity, one shall not only comprehend, but even anticipate the lessons of his master, by dint of natural discernment, while the other toils in vain to imbibe the least tincture of instruction.⁸²

Goldsmith's statement, commonplace and uninteresting as it is, does imply that there were thinkers in the century who held the contrary and very interesting opinion that men are born with equal mental endowments. According to Boswell,

Dr. Johnson denied that any child was better than another, but by difference of instruction; though, in consequence of greater attention being paid to instruction by one child than another, and of a variety of imperceptible causes, such as instruction being counteracted by servants, a notion was conceived, that of two children, equally well educated, one was naturally much worse than another.⁸³

Two statements could hardly be more contradictory than these just quoted from Goldsmith and Johnson. The latter in the same connection said to Boswell on another occasion:

I do not deny, Sir, but there is some original difference in minds; but it is nothing in comparison of what is formed by education. We may instance the science of *numbers*, which all minds are equally capable of attaining.⁸⁴

From this we may conclude I believe that Johnson's familiar theories of subordination must have had a foundation other than psychology. This unreasonable and democratic theory of mental equality, which we are rather surprised to find Johnson supporting, was propounded by many Eighteenth-Century thinkers and in its most extreme form by Helvétius who, according to Morley, believed that

of all the sources of intellectual difference between one man and another, organisation is the least influential. Intellectual differences are due to

82. "Upon Taste": *Works*, ed. Gibbs, I, 326.

83. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, II, 437, n. 2.

84. *Ibid.*, II, 436-7.

diversity of circumstance and to variety in education. It is not felicity of organisation that makes a great man. There is nobody in whom passion, interest, education, and favourable chance could not have surmounted all the obstacles of an unpromising nature; and there is no great man who, in the absence of passion, interest, education, and certain chances, would not have been a blockhead, in spite of his happier organisation. It is only in the moral region that we ought to seek the true cause of inequality of intellect. Genius is no singular gift of nature. Genius is common; it is only the circumstances proper to develop it that are rare. The man of genius is simply the product of the circumstances in which he is placed. The inequality in intelligence (*esprit*) that we observe among men, depends on the government under which they live, on the times in which their destiny has fallen, on the education that they have received, on the strength of their desire to achieve distinction, and finally on the greatness and fecundity of the ideas which they happen to make the object of their meditations.⁸⁵

In the *Essay on Man* Pope suggests a belief in intellectual equality in discoursing upon the distribution of judgment and happiness.

Equal is common sense, and common ease.⁸⁶

Pope's philosophy is consistent with the democratic notions set forth in the *Essay* Lord Bolingbroke had addressed to him. Although Bolingbroke in his estimate of the capability of man's mind seems in the following instance to minimize the individual talents of Locke, his statement is nevertheless worthy and admirable.

I know that, tho I can make some abstractions of my ideas, I am utterly unable to make such abstractions as Mr. LOCKE and other great masters of reason have taken it for granted they could and did make. . . . But I am conscious that there is no such power in my mind in any degree, and therefore I conclude, since we are all made of the same clay, a little coarser or a little finer, that there is no such power in their minds.⁸⁷

To find a statement more lavish in its expression of the equality of men's understandings, one may turn to another English peer, Lord Chesterfield, whose thoroughly democratic opinion that men are mentally equal is contained in the following sentences addressed to his son:

85. John Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædist*, II, 153-4.

86. *Essay on Man*, IV, 34.

87. *Works*, III, 441.

Your health will continue, while your temperance continues; and, at your age, nature takes sufficient care of the body, provided she is left to herself, and that intemperance on one hand, or medicines on the other, do not break in upon her. But it is by no means so with the mind, which, at your age particularly, requires great and constant care, and some physic. Every quarter of an hour, well or ill employed, will do it essential and lasting good or harm. It requires, also, a great deal of exercise, to bring it to a state of health and vigour. Observe the difference there is between minds cultivated, and minds uncultivated, and you will, I am sure, think that you cannot take too much pains, nor employ too much of your time in the culture of your own. A drayman is probably born with as good organs as Milton, Locke, or Newton; but, by culture, they are much more above him than he is above his horse. Sometimes, indeed, extraordinary geniuses have broken out by the force of nature, without the assistance of education; but those instances are too rare for any body to trust to; and even they would make a much greater figure, if they had the advantage of education into the bargain. If Shakespeare's genius had been cultivated, those beauties, which we so justly admire in him, would have been ungraced by those extravagancies, and that nonsense, with which they are frequently accompanied. People are, in general, what they are made, by education and company, from fifteen to five-and-twenty.⁸⁸

With Chesterfield's observations belongs a passage taken by Fraser from Leibniz's commentary on Locke's *Essay* that reveals in one way the democratic complexion of the new philosophy.

Quant à ceux qui manquent de capacité, il y en a peut-être moins qu'on ne pense; je crois que le bon sens avec l'application peuvent suffire à tout ce qui ne demande pas la promptitude. . . . Quelque différence originale qu'il y ait entre nos âmes (comme je crois en effet qu'il y en a) il est toujours sûr que l'une pourrait aller aussi loin que l'autre (mais non pas peut-être si vite) si elle était menée comme il faut.⁸⁹

With Chesterfield's observations belongs too the carefully weighed opinion of Adam Smith.

The difference of natural talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; . . . The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom,

88. *Letters to His Son*, I, 339–40. Letter 115.

89. Quoted in Locke, *Essay*, ed. Fraser, II, 446, n. 2.

and education. When they came into the world, and for the first six or eight years of their existence, they were very much alike, and neither their parents nor play-fellows could perceive any remarkable difference. About that age, or soon after, they come to be employed in very different occupations. The difference of talents comes then to be taken notice of, and widens by degrees, till at last the vanity of the philosopher is willing to acknowledge scarce any resemblance.⁹⁰

Intellectual democracy grew so naturally out of Locke's philosophy and fused so harmoniously into the political developments of the Eighteenth Century that one is tempted to suggest that the statement of equality which introduces our own Declaration of Independence implied an equality in mind as well as in civil rights, since the civil rights themselves are founded upon Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, whose very form and phraseology Jefferson followed in drafting the American Declaration.⁹¹ But, to return to English literature, in view of the inclination to grant equal mental abilities to all men, we are impressed with the appropriateness of the celebrations of the common man in the poems of Gray and Burns,⁹² both of whom had studied Locke. This democratic philosophy could require no more fitting verses than

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to extasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll.⁹³

It is knowledge, Locke infers, and not superior talents of mind, that accounts for the vast differences between men, and knowledge depends solely upon opportunities for intellectual improvement and the advantage to which men turn their faculties. He believed that,

had the Virginia king Apochancana been educated in England, he had been perhaps as knowing a divine, and as good a mathematician as any

90. *Wealth of Nations*, ed. Thorold Rogers, I, 16-17.

91. Carl Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, pp. 25-7.

92. See Auguste Angellier, *Robert Burns*, 2 vols., Paris, 1893, I, 21.

93. Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard."

in it; the difference between him and a more improved Englishman lying barely in this, that the exercise of his faculties was bounded within the ways, modes, and notions of his own country, and never directed to any other or further inquiries.⁹⁴

Since it is learning rather than a native capacity that generally separates one man from another, the moral issue behind Locke's attack on innate ideas and in the background of the entire *Essay* is the doctrine of work. His philosophy is a constant summons to men to inform their minds, to look abroad "beyond the smoke of their own chimneys," and employ to the full their mental faculties. Constant application, exertion and work alone can bring knowledge. This philosophy explains in part why Chesterfield was ever pressing and urging his son with such frequent exhortations as, "For God's sake, my dear boy, do not squander away one moment of your time, for every moment may be now most usefully employed."⁹⁵ The boy should not idle away any fifteen minutes that were unoccupied, but instead "take up a good book, I do not mean Descartes, Mallebranche, Locke, or Newton, by way of dipping; but some book of rational amusement; and detached pieces, as Horace, Boileau, Waller, La-Bruyere, &c. This will be so much time saved, and by no means ill employed."⁹⁶ In neither Locke's nor Chesterfield's time-scheme was there one Wordsworthian moment that could give us more than fifty years of reason and hard intellectual work.

Whatever loss may have been felt by Locke's dismissal of all innate ideas might be remedied by the unfortunate provision he makes for innate inclinations and thereby for a theory of ruling passions. Although Locke does not use the expression "ruling passion," in this same book of the *Essay*, while disproving innate ideas, he says:

Nature, I confess, has put into man a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery: these indeed are innate practical principles which (as practical principles ought) do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions without ceasing: these may be observed in all persons and all ages, steady and universal; . . . these are *inclinations of the appetite* to good, . . . I deny not that there are natural tendencies imprinted on the minds of men; and that from the very first instances of sense and perception,

94. *Essay*, I, iii, 12.

96. *Ibid.*, II, 334-5. Letter 184.

95. *Letters to His Son*, II, 7. Letter 120.

there are some things that are grateful and others unwelcome to them; some things that they incline to and others that they fly.⁹⁷

This assertion that man has an innate desire for happiness and an aversion to misery is the first stage in the evolution of the theory of ruling passions. In continuing this theme in a later part of the *Essay*,⁹⁸ Locke further observes that, in accordance with this natural desire for happiness and aversion to misery, the mind must always choose that which will give it happiness. Secondly, the thing which will give it happiness the mind recognizes by a feeling of uneasiness at its absence. This uneasiness at the want of what the mind considers good must in every case determine the will, be it a desire for something that is actually bad. If then we will but call this uneasiness that directs our choice a passion, and the greatest uneasiness a ruling passion, we have one complete genealogy of the theory popularized by Pope in the *Essay on Man* and the *Moral Essays*.

It was Pope's conception that we are born to ruling passions as the sparks fly upward.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Receives the lurking principle of death;
The young disease, that must subdue at length,
Grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength:
So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
The mind's disease, its ruling passion, came.⁹⁹

Since nature has fastened these passions upon us at birth, Pope believed that we could not subdue them, but must in a measure perform the actions they impel us to. We not only cannot suppress these passions, but should not since nature has implanted them in our souls for ends suited to humanity.

Hear then the truth: " 'Tis Heaven each passion sends,
And different men directs to different ends.
Extremes in Nature equal good produce,
Extremes in man concur to general use."¹⁰⁰

Locke supports Pope on the point that our choice is always determined by the greatest uneasiness, or ruling passion. But the same

97. *Essay*, I, ii, 3.

99. *Essay on Man*, II, 133-8.

98. *Essay*, II, xxi, 28-45.

100. *Moral Essays*, III, 159-62.

passage which reveals a source for Pope's doctrine also detects its fallacy. Although uneasiness commands the will, Locke asserts man's freedom to suspend his actions until his desires are elevated, "till he hungers or thirsts after righteousness,"¹⁰¹ so that the final uneasiness that directs his choice is a want of the greater good. This much liberty is not recognized in Pope's imperfect scheme, but it is most essential for the morality of Locke's philosophy.¹⁰² Locke's sentence that best expresses his conviction that a man can control his actions and forbear a hasty compliance with his desires has a Johnsonian ring.

Nor let any one say, he cannot govern his passions, nor hinder them from breaking out, and carrying him into action; for what he can do before a prince or a great man, he can do alone, or in the presence of God, if he will.¹⁰³

"*Cette remarque est très-bonne,*"¹⁰⁴ said Leibniz. Let us quote the actual words of Johnson of which we are reminded: "Sir, (said he,) we *know* our will is free, and *there's* an end on't."¹⁰⁵ Blackmore has an equally sensible assertion of human freedom in the *Creation*.

By her superior Pow'r the Reas'ning Soul
 Can each reluctant Appetite controul:
 Can ev'ry Passion rule, and ev'ry Sense,
 Change Nature's Course, and with her Laws dispense.¹⁰⁶

But for Pope reason must give way before passion, and on his side he has the able judgment of David Hume, who asserted that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them."¹⁰⁷

This discussion may help to clarify the portion of the theory of ruling passions, as interpreted by Pope, that relates to the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. But many of course overlooked Locke's common sense and succumbed to this deterministic view that put men in absolute subjection to their ruling passions. No aspect of Eighteenth-Century thought is so astonishing as the popularity of

101. *Essay*, II, xxi, 35.

102. *Essay*, II, xxi, 53.

103. *Essay*, II, xxi, 54.

104. Quoted in Locke, *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 350, n. 1.

105. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, II, 82.

106. *Creation*, VII, 465-8.

107. *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, p. 415.

this anti-rational conception of ruling passions which thus sets the intellect aside to leave us at the mercy of our passions. In the interests of industry Mandeville adopts this theory, being persuaded that selfish passions foster commerce and produce great, if not good, kingdoms.¹⁰⁸ Chesterfield paid almost superstitious attention to the doctrine of ruling passions, frequently advising his son to "Search . . . , with the greatest care, into the characters of all those whom you converse with; endeavour to discover their predominant passions."¹⁰⁹ And again, "Seek for their particular merit, their predominant passion, or their prevailing weakness; and you will then know what to bait your hook with, to catch them."¹¹⁰ Had Chesterfield's son met Hume for instance, he might, I suppose, in some way have taken advantage of the philosopher's love of literary fame which Hume confessed was his ruling passion.¹¹¹ Even Fielding may be charged with supposing that women are blindly led by the ungovernable passion of vanity.¹¹² Amusedly Sterne sees Uncle Toby at the mercy of his tyrannizing passion for military operations.¹¹³ In seriousness too Sterne can say, in a manner unworthy of his fine philosophical training and close acquaintance with Locke's *Essay*, that Herod would have been a good man were he not an almost innocent victim of his ruling passion for power.¹¹⁴

The frequency with which Eighteenth-Century writers placed man and his reason at the mercy of his passions, particularly his ruling passion, suggests that the age of reason might with more justice be called the age of passion.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently.

108. On the significance of the passions in Mandeville's economics, see *Fable of the Bees*, ed. Kaye, I, lxxviii ff.

109. *Letters to His Son*, I, 275. Letter 95.

110. *Ibid.*, II, 53. Letter 129. See also Letters 80, 151, 177.

111. Hume, "My Own Life": *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Green and Grose, I, 8.

112. *Tom Jones*, bk. XVI, cap. 9: *Works*, ed. Browne, VII, 423.

113. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. II, cap. 5: ed. Cross, p. 71.

114. *Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, 2 vols., Oxford, 1927, I, 101-11.

BOOK II

Of Ideas

ON approaching the second book of the *Essay* with its account of the origin of all ideas, including those which some had supposed innate, it should be remembered that, although literature has taken from this as well as other parts of the *Essay* its most attractive theories and appropriated them with little regard for their place in the general theme of Locke's philosophy, we are nevertheless obliged to follow in outline the sequence of Locke's argument. Without this framework of the reasoning of the *Essay* it would be impossible to indicate the meaning and significance of several literary references.

To proceed to a "wholly new and unborrowed"¹ history of the beginnings of human knowledge, it is first necessary to repeat Locke's definition of an "idea" as "whatsoever is the *object* of the understanding when a man thinks."² Whether simple or complex, in either case an idea stands as one uniform object in the presence of the mind.

The perception and contemplation of ideas, Locke maintained, require first of all consciousness. His statements that there is no secret method for ideas to steal unobserved into the understanding, and that the mind cannot contemplate and ponder ideas without active realization that it is thinking, constitute a total denial of the existence of what we today would call a subconscious mind. Believing that no thought could take place in the mind without our awareness, Locke said:

I confess myself to have one of those dull souls, that doth not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas; nor can conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move: the perception of ideas being (as I conceive) to the soul, what motion is to the body; not its essence, but one of its operations. And therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the proper action of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should be always thinking, always in

1. *Essay*, IV, xvii, 7.

2. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 32.

action. That, perhaps, is the privilege of the infinite Author and Preserver of all things, who "never slumbers nor sleeps."³

"Thus," to follow the words of the *Essay*, "methinks, every drowsy nod shakes their doctrine, who teach that the soul is always thinking."⁴ Those who contended that the soul always thinks even without our consciousness of the fact were the Cartesians, and here again, as on the question of innate ideas, it is to their philosophy that Locke is taking exception, though Bacon too had argued for the operation of the understanding during sleep, basing his opinion on the fact that the mind gives evidence of being clearer just before sleep.⁵

This problem of the mind offered a small meeting ground for the two forces we find for ever in conflict. On one side Isaac Watts, whose eagerness to elevate man's intellectual status was indicated by his defense of the innate ideas Locke had denied, continues to disagree with "this great Writer" by asserting that the soul does always think, even in that profound sleep which leaves no record of thought. The soul in this respect, he contends as he turns Locke's very words back to him, "bears a very near Resemblance to God, and is the fairest Image of its Maker, whose very Being admits of no Sleep nor Quiescence, but is all conscious Activity."⁶ Watts of course would have the support of Berkeley, to whose mind-dependent universe the assumption of a faculty constantly perceiving ideas was almost essential.⁷ Opposed to Watts stands Lord Bolingbroke, equally greedy for any fact that would lower the position of the human mind. Consequently he owns,

since LOCKE has owned the same, that I have "one of those dull souls that does not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas." I distinguish very well between being asleep and being awake. I continue to live but not to think during the soundest sleep, and the faculties of my soul and body awake together.⁸

Voltaire gave his approbation to this contention, saying, "I shall boast that I have the Honour to be as stupid in this Particular as Mr.

3. *Essay*, II, i, 10.

4. *Essay*, II, i, 13.

5. *Novum Organum*, bk. II, sec. 26: ed. Thomas Fowler, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1889, p. 431.

6. *Philosophical Essays*, Essay V, sec. 3.

7. *Principles of Human Knowledge*, sec. 98.

8. *Works*, III, 511.

Locke. No one shall ever make me believe, that I think always."⁹ If the approval of Bolingbroke and Voltaire does not permit one to rush to the conclusion that the Eighteenth Century was so utopian that it was undisturbed by a subconscious mind, this much could be said in certainty, that the most popular psychology of the century ignored completely the possibilities of subconscious thought. *edge for start*

With consciousness requisite for the perception of ideas, Locke then establishes as the two and only sources of all our ideas sensation and reflection, and the first and "great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call SENSATION."¹⁰ Sensation offers to the mind certain simple ideas, simple because they contain in them "nothing but *one uniform appearance, or conception,*"¹¹ and cannot be analyzed and separated into different parts, though such a simple, indivisible idea may come to us by more than one sense, as, for example, the idea of motion which we may both see and feel. In addition to motion, the other most significant simple ideas produced by sensation are space and solidity, because these are generally ingredients of all complex ideas. Yet there are multitudes of simple ideas belonging to each of the five senses, though Locke does not enumerate all of them, nor, he says,

is it possible if we would; there being a great many more of them belonging to most of the senses than we have names for. The variety of smells, which are as many almost, if not more, than species of bodies in the world, do most of them want names. Sweet and stinking commonly serve our turn for these ideas, which in effect is little more than to call them pleasing or displeasing; though the smell of a rose and violet, both sweet, are certainly very distinct ideas. Nor are the different tastes, that by our palates we receive ideas of, much better provided with names.¹²

In the reception of the simple ideas of sensation the understanding remains passive and is not much privileged to decide whether or not it will accept these materials out of which it later frames and invents by its active power complex ideas.¹³ More fatal still, the human mind can invent no new simple idea at pleasure. New complex ideas, on

9. *Letters concerning the English Nation*, p. 99. Letter 13.

10. *Essay*, II, i, 3.

11. *Essay*, II, ii, 1.

12. *Essay*, II, iii, 2.

13. *Essay*, II, i, 25; II, xii, 1.

the contrary, may be created by repeating, comparing, and uniting the simple ideas with which the mind is stored. "But it is not in the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thought, to *invent* or *frame* one new simple idea in the mind."¹⁴ The barriers continue to close around the human understanding with these two additional suppositions that the mind is resigned to admit simple ideas, and further that it can by no effort of its own invent one new simple idea. To these restrictions Locke has added, however, a sacred and religious significance by asserting that it has been ordained by God that external objects should "produce in us such sensations"¹⁵ . . . by established laws and ways, suitable to his wisdom and goodness, though incomprehensible to us."¹⁶ While sensation is enthroned at the head of all human knowledge, it is at the same time sanctified with a definite religious distinction. With this implication Butler is able to accept Locke's sensational philosophy, believing likewise that eyes and ears are "instruments of our receiving such ideas from external objects, as the Author of nature appointed those external objects to be the occasions of exciting in us."¹⁷

For making sensation the starting point of knowledge Locke has been accused of sensualizing human understanding,¹⁸ and fathering a licentious philosophy that "the senses are the beginning and end of all our knowledge," with the result that he and his followers who assented to this philosophy have been indiscriminately designated as the "*école sensualiste*,"¹⁹ at whose principles Kant struck in his *Critique of Pure Reason* by demonstrating that there is a reason wholly independent of the sensation and experience which Locke had assumed to be the foundation of all knowledge.²⁰ Whatever may have been the harmful influence of Locke's sense philosophy on the Continent (and De Maistre does attribute the materialism and libertinism of Eighteenth-Century France partly to Locke), there is no indication in English life, judged by literature, that this philosophy deserved to be stigmatized with any of the implications of sensualism.

14. *Essay*, II, ii, 2.

15. *Essay*, II, xxx, 2. See also II, xxxi, 2; II, xxxii, 16.

16. *Essay*, II, xxxii, 14.

17. *Analogy*, I, i, 17.

18. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 217, n. 2.

19. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, xiii.

20. Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, 394.

Even Bolingbroke was temperate in his statement of the importance of the five senses in the acquisition of knowledge, quietly asserting that "sense was first in the order of mental operations, but that intellect was first in dignity."²¹

Sense and intellect must conspire in the acquisition of physical knowledge; but the latter must never proceed independently of the former. Experiment is that pillar of fire, which can alone conduct us to the promised land: and they who lose sight of it, lose themselves in the dark wilds of imagination.²²

There is similar purity of thought in Gray's Latin lines of the *De Principiis Cogitandi* that picture the senses bearing ideas to the temple of the mind, around which

. . . coëunt, densoque feruntur
Agmine notitiæ, simulacraque tenuia rerum:
Ecce autem naturæ ingens aperitur imago
Immensa, variique patent commercia mundi.²³

Whatever was vicious in the sensational philosophy of the age hardly vented itself beyond a ridicule of Platonism, sometimes severe as in Pope's

Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod;
And quitting sense call imitating God.²⁴

This satire, however, had more often the gentle nature of Richardson's reminder that "Platonic love is Platonic nonsense,"²⁵ seconded by Fielding's observation that "That refined degree of Platonic affection which is absolutely detached from the flesh, and is, indeed, entirely and purely spiritual, is a gift confined to the female part of the creation."²⁶ Perhaps Chesterfield's insistence upon "the Graces, the Graces" may seem to reduce life wholly to the level of sense. "Please

21. *Works*, III, 357.

22. *Ibid.*, III, 385-6.

23. *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, 187.

Cf. Blackmore, *Creation*, VII, 314-15:

"Where sits this bright Intelligence enthron'd,
With numberless Ideas pour'd around."

24. *Essay on Man*, II, 23-6.

25. *Pamela*, Letter 78: *Works*, ed. Stephen, III, 237.

26. *Tom Jones*, bk. XVI, cap. 5: *Works*, ed. Browne, VII, 402.

the eyes and the ears," he advised his son, "they will introduce you to the heart; and, nine times in ten, the heart governs the understanding."²⁷ And it is with some feeling of moral alarm that we hear the gently hedonistic Boswell say, "Let us cultivate, under the command of good principles, '*la théorie des sensations agréables.*'"²⁸ But sensation, far from having any generally malicious effect on English life and letters, was most probably greatly diverted into the mild channels of sensibility, a word, it will be noted, that in England was "rare until the middle of the 18th century,"²⁹ which was exactly the period of Locke's great popularity. Thus Sterne, in whose mind we are told the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* underwent a "sea-change,"³⁰ sought all kinds of delightful sensation and experience, and praised the giver, "Dear sensibility! . . . Eternal fountain of our feelings! . . . —all comes from thee, great—great SENSORIUM of the world!"³¹ These delicate feelings were politely cherished by an impeccable Sophia Western, who, when asked if she did love to cry, replied, "I love a tender sensation, . . . and would pay the price of a tear for it at any time."³² Mid-Eighteenth-Century sensibility may well be an offspring of the "licentious" philosophy that had grounded knowledge in sensation.

But Locke's philosophy, applied to the operations of the understanding, solicited the attention of all men who regarded the manner in which ideas were brought to the mind. The numerous indications in literature that ideas were closely associated with external, sensible objects begin with the significant use of the word "idea" itself, which in some instances is made to stand for an object outside the mind in a connection which now seems unusual, as in Thomson's description of a dove whose mate has been killed.

Again

The sad *idea* of his murdered mate,
Struck from his side by savage fowler's guile,
Across his fancy comes.³³

27. *Letters to His Son*, II, 166. Letter 150.

28. *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 344. 29. NED.

30. *Sentimental Journey*, ed. W. L. Cross, New York, 1926, p. x.

31. *Sentimental Journey*, "The Bourbonnois": ed. Cross, p. 161.

32. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. VI, cap. 5: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 308–09.

33. *Summer*, 617–20. The italics in this and the two following quotations are mine.

Tom Jones obviously gives the word the same peculiar meaning when, finally meeting Sophia at Lady Bellaston's home, he confesses, "Though I despaired of possessing you, nay, almost of ever seeing you more, I doated still on your charming *idea*, and could seriously love no other woman."³⁴ The idiom seems to suggest itself immediately in the case of any forlorn lover for we find Burns adopting it in an almost identical situation.

Tho' cruel fate should bid us part,
Far as the pole and line;
Her dear *idea* round my heart
Should tenderly entwine.³⁵

This usage of "idea," which to us sounds awkward and strange, was perhaps natural in an age whose philosophy allowed external objects to be converted easily into ideas.

Another indication of the extent to which ideas were believed to be derived by sensation from without is found in the Eighteenth Century's conception of imagination. In his papers on the "Pleasures of Imagination"³⁶ Addison gives the true Lockian emphasis to sensation by making imagination the reception of ideas through sight.

By the pleasures of the imagination or fancy . . . I here mean such as arise from visible objects, either when we have them actually in our view, or when we call up their ideas into our minds by paintings, statutes, descriptions, or any the like occasion. We cannot indeed have a single image in the fancy that did not make its first entrance through the sight.⁸⁷

Imagination to Addison and to many of his age meant first of all a power of observation, wherefore it was an attribute of physical rather than intellectual experience. This narrow interpretation of imagination is explicit in Watts's definition of the term.

Our imagination is nothing else but the various appearances of our sensible ideas in the brain, where the soul frequently works in uniting, disjoining, multiplying, magnifying, diminishing, and altering the several shapes, colours, sounds, motions, words, and things, that have been communicated to us by the outward organs of sense. It is no wonder therefore

34. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. XIII, cap. 11: *Works*, ed. Browne, VII, 248.

35. "Tho' Cruel Fate."

36. *Spectator*, Nos. 411-21.

37. *Ibid.*, No. 411.

if fancy leads us into many mistakes, for it is but sense at second hand. Whatever is strongly impressed upon the imagination, some persons believe to be true.³⁸

Akenside, who followed Addison closely in his versification of the "Pleasures of Imagination," shows a mind dependent upon the sensible world for its original ideas.

Now the soul
At length discloses every tuneful spring,
To that harmonious movement from without,
Responsive.³⁹

Thomson similarly explains that the fancy of man's mind is supplied by receiving

The whole magnificence of heaven and earth,
And every beauty, delicate or bold,
Obvious or more remote, with livelier sense,
Diffusive painted on the rapid mind.⁴⁰

In keeping with this Eighteenth-Century definition of imagination as sense at second hand are Sterne's accounts of his intellectual experiences. No testimony to the importance of sensation for stocking the mind with ideas could be more distinguished than Sterne's description of the way ideas came into the fold of his curious mind.

I wish you saw me half starting out of my chair, with what confidence, as I grasp the elbow of it, I look up—catching the idea, even sometimes before it half way reaches me—

I believe in my conscience I intercept many a thought which heaven intended for another man.⁴¹

Although Yorick's rapacity may have helped him overcome the handicap of being obliged to take ideas from without, nevertheless he realized that his mind was generally at the mercy of sensation, for he said, "A man cannot dress, but his ideas get clothed at the same time; and if he dresses like a gentleman, every one of them stands

38. *Logick*, Part II, cap. iii, sec. 3.

39. *Pleasures of Imagination*, I, 121-4.

40. *Summer*, 1749-52.

41. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. VIII, cap. 2: ed. Cross, p. 435.

presented to his imagination, genteelized along with him—.”⁴² This is asserting no less than that our dress creates our ideas, which, I take it, is a refreshing reversal of the ordinary philosophy of clothes. If Fielding did not go so far as to surrender the human mind to the mercy of any tailor, he does indicate its subservience and obedience to the outside world in the formation of its ideas. One night Tom Jones, whose melancholy affection for the moon is too often forgotten, was saying to Partridge:

“I wish I was at the top of this hill; it must certainly afford a most charming prospect, especially by this light; for the solemn gloom which the moon casts on all objects, is beyond expression beautiful, especially to an imagination which is desirous of cultivating melancholy ideas.”—“Very probably,” answered Partridge; “but if the top of the hill be properst to produce melancholy thoughts, I suppose the bottom is the likeliest to produce merry ones, and these I take to be much the better of the two.”⁴³

The strange notion that the larger the object contemplated by the mind, the greater would be the thought provoked, was a popular Eighteenth-Century conception, denoting the mind’s reliance upon sensation. Edward Young, who was almost Berkeleian in his depreciation of the physical world, this “land of apparitions, empty shades,” remained enough the realist to subscribe to the opinion that our thoughts are enlarged in proportion to the size of the objects contemplated.

The mind that would be happy, must be great;
Great, in its wishes; great, in its surveys.
Extended views a narrow mind extend.⁴⁴

Because extended views do extend a narrow mind Isaac Watts was most emphatic in recommending to the young the study of astronomy which would accustom them to “take in vast and sublime Ideas without Pain or Difficulty.”⁴⁵ In accordance with this sensational philosophy Addison had determined that architecture was the most capable

42. *Ibid.*, bk. IX, cap. 13: ed. Cross, p. 502.

43. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. VIII, cap. 10: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 486–7.

44. *Night Thoughts*, IX, 1381–3.

45. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 16, “Of Enlarging the Capacity of the Mind.” See also the Dedication of Watts’s *Knowledge of the Heavens and the Earth Made Easy*.

of the arts in giving pleasure to the imagination because it presents a greatness of size which "strikes in with the natural greatness of the soul."⁴⁶ He then transferred this psychology to the conception of God by correlating the idea of a Deity with the great expanse of the sea.

I must confess, it is impossible for me to survey this world of fluid matter without thinking on the hand that first poured it out, and made a proper channel for its reception. Such an object naturally raises in my thoughts the idea of an Almighty Being, and convinces me of His existence as much as a metaphysical demonstration. The imagination prompts the understanding, and by the greatness of the sensible object, produces in it the idea of a Being who is neither circumscribed by time nor space.⁴⁷

As there was scarcely a notion concerning the operations of man's mind that escaped the searching intellect of Laurence Sterne, we discover in his writings this same observation, turned in his customary manner to the purposes of humour.

I confess I do hate all cold conceptions, as I do the puny ideas which engender them; and am generally so struck with the great works of nature, that for my own part, if I could help it, I never would make a comparison less than a mountain at least. All that can be said against the French sublime in this instance of it, is this—that the grandeur is *more* in the *word*; and *less* in the *thing*. No doubt the ocean fills the mind with vast ideas; but Paris being so far inland, it was not likely I should run post a hundred miles out of it, to try the experiment—⁴⁸

It was Tom Paine's opinion that the very size and vastness of America developed in the minds of our people the large and generous ideas of liberty that expressed themselves in the Declaration of Independence.

The scene which that country presents to the eye of a spectator, has something in it which generates and encourages great ideas. Nature appears to him in magnitude. The mighty objects he beholds, act upon his mind by enlarging it, and he partakes of the greatness he contemplates.⁴⁹

These several illustrations, some of them trivial, when taken to-

46. *Spectator*, No. 415.

47. *Ibid.*, No. 489.

48. *Sentimental Journey*, "The Wig—Paris": ed. Cross, p. 80.

49. *Rights of Man*, Part II, Introduction: *Writings*, ed. M. D. Conway, 4 vols., New York, 1894–6, II, 402. See also M. D. Conway, *Life of Paine*, 2 vols., New York, 1892, I, 241.

gether, would support a theory that the Eighteenth-Century literary mind was directed outwards to the world of sensible objects for its ideas. Rules for writing consistent with this philosophy were actually formed when Addison dictated "that a noble writer should be born with this faculty in its full strength and vigour, so as to be able to receive lively ideas from outward objects."⁵⁰ Similar counsel may be taken from that significant passage in *Rasselas* which explains how the poet prepares himself for his work.

Being now resolved to be a poet, I saw every thing with a new purpose; my sphere of attention was suddenly magnified: no kind of knowledge was to be overlooked. I ranged mountains and deserts for images and resemblances, and pictured upon my mind every tree of the forest and flower of the valley. I observed with equal care the crags of the rock and the pinnacles of the palace. Sometimes I wandered along the mazes of the rivulet, and sometimes watched the changes of the summer clouds. To a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful, and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination: he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, and meteors of the sky, must all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety: for every idea is useful for the enforcement or decoration of moral or religious truth; and he, who knows most, will have most power of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions and unexpected instruction.⁵¹

For one who would sink instead of rise in poetry, Pope advised "familiarizing his mind to the lowest objects."⁵² In each case a careful observation of external objects is recommended as a preparation for writing. Apparently the last thing that would have occurred to the Eighteenth-Century poet was to look into his heart and write.

Fielding applied this objective literary philosophy in his composition by giving exact attention to the outward appearance and behaviour of men, which permitted him to say that in *Joseph Andrews* there is "scarce a character or action produced which I have not taken from my own observations and experience."⁵³ The world of reality

50. *Spectator*, No. 417.

51. Johnson, *Rasselas*, cap. 10: ed. R. W. Chapman, Oxford, 1927, pp. 48-9.

52. *Martinus Scriblerus: Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, (363).

53. Preface to *Joseph Andrews: Works*, ed. Browne, V, 18.

which Fielding knew by sensation, experience, and observation, was made to provide the ideas and substance of his novels. "Reason," Sterne has written, "is, half of it, Sense";⁵⁴ it is feeling, seeing, hearing, sensing the world and life outside the mind with precision and accuracy. This type of reason belonged in the highest degree to the poet James Thomson, "distinguished, above any writer who had preceded him, at least for a hundred years, by his tireless habit of observation."⁵⁵ The exact descriptions of the visible world in the *Seasons* are the efforts of one who seemed to believe that nature is the mother of ideas. What could possibly be a more careful, objective scrutiny of the sensible world than this Newtonian analysis of a rainbow!

Meantime, refracted from yon eastern cloud,
 Bestriding earth, the grand ethereal bow
 Shoots up immense; and every hue unfolds,
 In fair proportion running from the red
 To where the violet fades into the sky.
 Here, awful Newton, the dissolving clouds
 Form, fronting on the sun, thy showery prism;
 And to the sage-instructed eye unfold
 The various twine of light, by thee disclosed
 From the white mingling maze.⁵⁶

The explanation of Thomson's poetic method is contained in the *Seasons'* praise of the new philosophy and its celebration of the names of Bacon, Boyle, Newton, and Locke. It was to be expected, after Locke had placed the origin of ideas in sensation, that a poet schooled in this philosophy should hasten to describe with accuracy and care several natural objects which furnish ideas for the mind. Thomson's poetry allows for this interpretation since he borrowed freely from the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and apparently believed that

. . . Locke,
 Who made the whole internal world his own,⁵⁷

well knew whence the mind's ideas come.

54. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. VII, cap. 13: ed. Cross, p. 395.

55. *Seasons*, Muses' Library Edition, p. xvii.

56. *Spring*, 203-12.

57. *Summer*, 1558-9.

Once the mind is stored by sensation with simple ideas, Locke tells us, it may acquire several new simple ideas by reflecting upon its own activities in connection with the ideas sensation has provided. Reflection, which is therefore the second great source of ideas, is but "the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got."⁵⁸ "The senses ever point out the way," Goldsmith repeats, "and reflection comments upon the discovery."⁵⁹ When the mind turns upon itself and watches its own workings, it observes as its most original faculty the power to perceive objects, so that perception becomes therefore the first simple idea arising from reflection.⁶⁰ Our inability to understand what perception is otherwise than by looking to our own minds is indicated in Blackmore's couplet,

The Mind proceeds, and to Reflection goes,
Perceives she does Perceive, and knows she Knows.⁶¹

By further observing its own operations about the ideas received from sensation, the mind acquires the simple idea of volition.⁶² All other ideas concerning our mind's activities are variations of these two simple ideas, perception and volition. The idea of retention, arising from our observation that we can recall our ideas, is a "secondary perception, as I may so call it, or viewing again the ideas that are lodged in the memory."⁶³ Other acts of which the mind is conscious are its power to compare two ideas,⁶⁴ and the ability to compound several simple ideas into a complex idea.⁶⁵ Reflection further provides the idea that the mind can abstract and use names as signs to designate ideas.⁶⁶ Addison summarizes much of this in his observation that, after the mind has been supplied by sensation, we then "have the power of retaining, altering and compounding those images which we have once received into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination."⁶⁷ In the following lines from Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, the author remarks how

58. *Essay*, II, i, 4.

60. *Essay*, II, ix.

62. *Essay*, II, vi.

64. *Essay*, II, xi, 4.

66. *Essay*, II, xi, 8, 9.

59. *Citizen of the World*, Letter 11.

61. *Creation*, VII, 253-4.

63. *Essay*, II, x, 7.

65. *Essay*, II, xi, 6.

67. *Spectator*, No. 411.

ideas received from sensation are operated upon by the understanding:

Thus at length
 Indow'd with all that nature can bestow,
 The child of fancy oft in silence bends
 O'er these mix'd treasures of his pregnant breast,
 With conscious pride. From them he oft resolves
 To frame he knows not what excelling things.⁶⁸

Most of the ideas the mind receives "when it turns its view inward upon itself, and observes its own actions"⁶⁹ are stated in this passage in Thomson's *Summer*:

With inward view,
 Thence on the ideal kingdom swift she turns
 Her eye; and instant, at her powerful glance,
 The obedient phantoms vanish or appear;
 Compound, divide, and into order shift,
 Each to his rank, from plain perception up
 To the fair forms of fancy's fleeting train;
 To reason then, deducing truth from truth,
 And notion quite abstract.⁷⁰

Within the brief compass of these lines Thomson has included the mind's powers to recall, compound, perceive, and abstract, which are the chief simple ideas brought by reflection. It is these subjective ideas of reflection which Butler believed would be preserved after death even though those of sensation be destroyed.⁷¹

Among the faculties noticeable in the understanding Locke gives special regard to the mind's power of "*discerning* and *distinguishing* between the several ideas it has,"⁷² for there would be very little knowledge if we only perceived ideas, without knowing whether two were the same or different. Judgment it is that tells us the agreement or disagreement of our ideas. In elaborating upon this most valuable talent of the understanding Locke was led to say:

If in having our ideas in the memory ready at hand consists quickness of parts; in this, of having them unconfused, and being able nicely to dis-

68. *Pleasures of Imagination*, III, 373-8.

69. *Essay*, II, vi.

71. *Analogy*, I, i, 24.

70. *Summer*, 1788-96.

72. *Essay*, II, xi, i.

tinguish one thing from another, where there is but the least difference, consists, in a great measure, the exactness of judgment, and clearness of reason, which is to be observed in one man above another. And hence perhaps may be given some reason of that common observation,—that men who have a great deal of wit, and prompt memories, have not always the clearest judgment or deepest reason. For *wit* lying most in the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy; *judgment*, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another.⁷³

Locke's distinction between *wit*, the assembling of ideas, and *judgment*, the separating of them, two quite contrary powers of the understanding that rarely belong to the same person, has obviously little significance in the development of the philosophy of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Rather this definition of *wit* as opposed to *judgment* is a detached bit of psychology that becomes, however, very useful in leading us through the wilderness of Eighteenth-Century *wit*. Simply within the writings of Pope *wit* may stand for a jester, an author, the intellect, a poet, a joke, the *judgment*, the antithesis of *judgment*, etc., etc.⁷⁴ To increase the confusion we have Fielding's intentionally perplexing definition of *wit* as "Prophaneness, Indecency, Immorality, Scurrility, Mimickry, Buffoonery. Abuse of all good Men, and especially of the Clergy."⁷⁵ Only Locke's clear exposition of *wit*, as contrasted with *judgment*, can help us find our way through this dark jungle of metaphor.

Locke was not the first to note as mental traits that some men have a faculty for assembling, and others for separating, ideas, for Bacon had already written: "*Maximum et velut radicale discriminem ingeniorum, quoad philosophiam et scientias, illud est; quod alia ingenia sint fortiora et aptiora ad notandas rerum differentias; alia, ad notandas rerum similitudines.*"⁷⁶ Malebranche followed Bacon, but preceded Locke, in calling attention to this same phenomenon, that "*Il y*

73. *Essay*, II, xi, 2. See Basil Willey, *Seventeenth Century Background*, London, 1934, pp. 290–5.

74. *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, II, 25.

75. *Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 4.

76. Quoted in Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, 153, n. 2.

a donc des esprits de deux sortes. Les uns remarquent aisément les différences des choses, et ce sont les bons esprits. Les autres imaginent et supposent de la ressemblance entr'elles, et ce sont les esprits superficiels."⁷⁷ But it is to Locke, designating these two operations of the mind with the English names of wit and judgment, that this theory owes its popularity in the writings of Englishmen of the Eighteenth Century. In 1677 wit meant for Dryden, according to his definition in the Preface to the *State of Innocence*, "a propriety of Thoughts and Words; or in other terms, Thought and Words, elegantly adapted to the Subject,"⁷⁸ but in 1692, two years after the appearance of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, he has a quite different interpretation of wit, and one that coincides exactly with Locke's. In the Dedication of "Eleonora" he remarks:

The reader will easily observe, that I was transported by the multitude and variety of my similitudes; which are generally the product of a luxuriant fancy, and the wantonness of wit. Had I call'd in my judgment to my assistance, I had certainly retrench'd many of them.⁷⁹

That Dryden had learned from Locke that wit was the faculty of assembling ideas and finding similitudes, cannot yet be said definitely, but it is certain that after Locke this notion of wit and judgment, the former a process of combining, the latter of separating ideas, was common and popular.

Addison took the theory out of the *Essay* to give it circulation in the sixty-second issue of the *Spectator*, written in his best manner and beginning, "MR. LOCKE has an admirable reflection upon the difference of wit and judgment, whereby he endeavours to show the reason why they are not always the talents of the same person. His words are as follow: . . ." After quoting Locke's definition, which we have given above, he continues:

This is, I think, the best and most philosophical account that I have ever met with of wit, which generally, though not always, consists in such a resemblance and congruity of ideas as this author mentions. I shall only add to it, by way of explanation, that every resemblance of ideas is not that which we call wit, unless it be such an one that gives delight and

77. Quoted in Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, 153, n. 2.

78. *State of Innocence*, London, 1677. See the final paragraph of the Preface.

79. *Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 270.

surprise to the reader. These two properties seem essential to wit, more particularly the last of them. In order therefore that the resemblance in the ideas be wit, it is necessary that the ideas should not lie too near one another in the nature of things; for where the likeness is obvious, it gives no surprise. To compare one man's singing to that of another, or to represent the whiteness of any object by that of milk and snow, or the variety of its colours by those of the rainbow, cannot be called wit, unless, besides this obvious resemblance, there be some further congruity discovered in the two ideas that is capable of giving the reader some surprise. Thus when a poet tells us, the bosom of his mistress is as white as snow, there is no wit in the comparison: but when he adds, with a sigh, that it is as cold too, it then grows into wit.

Blackmore has merely repeated Locke's definition in stating that the mind

. . . does Distinguish here, and there Unite,
The Mark of Judgment That, and This of Wit.⁸⁰

In the background of Pope's explanation,

True wit is nature to advantage dressed;
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed,⁸¹

one may detect Locke's reasoning, for dressing nature to advantage is but assembling ideas in nature with quickness and variety to form pleasant and agreeable pictures. Thomson apparently considered Locke's and Pope's definitions of wit one and the same, for he combines elements of each in the following passage, where it is said that, when we are weary of serious thoughts, then

We, shifting for relief, would play the shapes
Of frolic fancy; and incessant form
Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
Of fleet ideas, never joined before,
Whence lively wit excites to gay surprise.⁸²

The tradition that treated wit as the process of combining ideas was continued by Akenside, who notes in the Introduction to *Pleasures of Imagination* that the first enjoyment arising "from the relations

80. *Creation*, VII, 273-4.

82. *Winter*, 610-14.

81. *Essay on Criticism*, 297-8.

of different objects one to another" is "that various and complicated resemblance existing between several parts of the material and immaterial worlds, which is the foundation of metaphor and wit."⁸³ This interpretation of wit follows down into the writings of Goldsmith with no variation.

When an unexpected similitude in two objects strikes the imagination—in other words, when a thing is *wittily* expressed—all our pleasure turns into admiration of the artist, who had fancy enough to draw the picture.⁸⁴

Johnson retained Locke's definition of wit, ascribing this ability to unite ideas to the ingenious metaphysical poets.

Wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they [the Metaphysical School] have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together.⁸⁵

The indifference with which Johnson awarded wit to the unpopular metaphysical poets indicates the truth that this faculty of the mind was not considered rare. Shaftesbury criticized the authors of his time, not for their want of wit, but for their lack of "judgment and correctness, which can only be attained by thorough diligence, study, and impartial censure of themselves."⁸⁶ Wit was again minimized when Pope made it the corner-stone of Bathos and advised whoever would excel in this art studiously to

avoid, detest, and turn his head from all the ideas, ways, and workings of that pestilent foe to wit, and destroyer of fine figures, which is known by the name of common sense. His business must be to contract the true *gout de travers*; and to acquire a most happy, uncommon, unaccountable way of thinking.⁸⁷

It was perhaps to be expected that Edward Young would be willing to discount and deplore this same talent of the mind.

83. *Pleasures of Imagination*, London, 1744, p. ix.

84. *Present State of Polite Learning: Works*, ed. Gibbs, III, 515.

85. Cowley: *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. Hill, I, 20.

86. *Characteristics*, ed. J. M. Robertson, 2 vols., London, 1900, I, 181.

87. *Martinus Scriblerus: Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, (354).

Wit, how delicious to man's dainty taste!
 'Tis precious, as the vehicle of sense;
 But, as its substitute, a dire disease.
 Pernicious talent! flatter'd by the world,
 By the blind world, which thinks the talent rare.
 Wisdom is rare, Lorenzo! wit abounds.

Observe, as he continues, Locke's definition of judgment:

Wisdom, awful wisdom! which inspects,
 Discerns, compares, weighs, separates, infers,
 Seizes the right, and holds it to the last;
 How rare!⁸⁸

Since wit, according to Pope, is a characteristic of the poet while judgment similarly is the mark of the critic,⁸⁹ and since wit was considered inferior to judgment, the disposition of the age would appear to be in the direction of critical prose away from poetry.

Wit appeared a sorry thing in itself, and worthless unless accompanied by judgment, in such unusual individuals as Horace, whom Pope thought "supreme in judgment, as in wit."⁹⁰ So Mr. B, when he would intentionally compliment Pamela, credits her with superiority in both wit and judgment.⁹¹ But Locke had made wit and judgment two very different, almost incompatible faculties of the mind, rarely the gift of the same person. Pope was impressed with opposition between these mental traits, that

. . . wit and judgment often are at strife,
 Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.⁹²

But Sterne, the born humourist, viewed with such actual alarm the barrier Locke had placed between wit and judgment that the thought troubled him as he wrote *Tristram*. Yorick ponders while riding his horse, "that brisk trotting and slow argumentation, like wit and judgment, were two incompatible movements."⁹³ And so, when Sterne

88. *Night Thoughts*, VIII, 1232-7, 1247-50.

89. *Essay on Criticism*, 17-18. 90. *Ibid.*, 657.

91. Richardson, *Pamela: Works*, ed. Stephen, I, 401.

92. *Essay on Criticism*, 82-3.

93. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. I, cap. 10: ed. Cross, p. 14.

finds time to pen his "Author's Preface," which appears as the twentieth chapter of Book Three, he strives practically in self-defense to demolish the wall separating wit and judgment. His method of writing was, he testifies,

taking care only, as I went along, to put into it all the wit and the judgment (be it more or less) which the great Author and Bestower of them had thought fit originally to give me—so that, as your worships see,—'tis just as God pleases.

Now, Agelastes (speaking dispraisingly) sayeth, That there may be some wit in it, for aught he knows—but no judgment at all. And Trip-tolemus and Phutatorius agreeing thereto, ask, How is it possible there should? for that wit and judgment in this world never go together; inasmuch as they are two operations differing from each other as wide as east from west—So, says Locke—so are farting and hiccupping, say I.

Through the entire Preface to *Tristram Shandy* Sterne therefore endeavours to prove, by his syllogistic reasoning which hinges mostly upon the illustration of a cane chair with two ornamental knobs, that wit and judgment do and must accompany each other. Yorick rarely disagrees with his master in philosophy, but "the great Locke, who was seldom outwitted by false sounds—was nevertheless bubbled here. . . . —it was his glory to free the world from the lumber of a thousand vulgar errors;—but this was not of the number." Locke's statement of the incompatibility of wit and judgment has, Sterne argues, "been made the *Magna Charta* of stupidity ever since," which, I think, is the last word to be said on this theory. Sterne leaves us simply to imagine the vast multitudes of Eighteenth-Century dullards who under the protection of Locke were left unmolested in their enjoyment of the superior faculty of "judgment."

The distinction between wit and judgment, it will be recalled, arose out of the discussion of the simple ideas the mind receives when it reflects upon its own operations and considers what it does with those ideas furnished by sensation. By this introspection the mind observes its power to perceive, recall, compare, compound, name these ideas, and to distinguish by its faculty of judgment between them. It is noteworthy how many of man's simple ideas of reflection Locke allows also to brutes, for he grants that all animals possess the

faculty of perception,⁹⁴ and that memory too is an attribute of the mind of the brute as well as of man.

This faculty of laying up and retaining the ideas that are brought into the mind, several other animals seem to have to a great degree, as well as man. For, to pass by other instances, birds learning of tunes, and the endeavours one may observe in them to hit the notes right, put it past doubt with me, that they have perception, and retain ideas in their memories, and use them for patterns.⁹⁵

In addition to perceiving and recalling ideas, brutes may compare a little, though not in any great degree,⁹⁶ as it is possible they may compound somewhat, since a dog may take the separate ideas of shape, smell, and voice belonging to a man, and combine them into the complex idea of his master.⁹⁷ "John stroaking Tripp, the Greyhound," we read in Prior's *Dialogue between Locke and Montaigne*, "says to Margaret, Do you think Child, that a Dog tho he can retain several combinations of simple Idea's, can ever compound, enlarge, or make complex Idea's?"⁹⁸ Most important of all, Locke allows brutes the power to reason, "For if they have any ideas at all, and are not bare machines, (as some would have them,) we cannot deny them to have some reason."⁹⁹ Therefore this faculty "whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from beasts, and wherein it is evident he much surpasses them,"¹⁰⁰ is nevertheless in a measure the endowment of some animals. This theory that brutes may reason will be appealing or repellent as it is considered a generous attempt to elevate the status of lower animals, or a misanthropic effort to debase mankind. Locke probably had neither intention; rather in a truthful investigation of man's mind "he traces," in the words of Voltaire, "Step by Step, the Progress of his Understanding; examines what Things he has in common with Beasts, and what he possesses above them."¹⁰¹ This examination convinced him that it was not the faculty but the degree of reason that distinguished man from all other living animals.

In allowing brutes to have some reason, Locke was contradicting

94. *Essay*, II, ix, 12.

95. *Essay*, II, x, 10.

96. *Essay*, II, xi, 5.

97. *Essay*, II, xi, 7.

98. *Dialogues of the Dead and Other Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. Waller, p. 245.

99. *Essay*, II, xi, 11.

100. *Essay*, IV, xvii, 1.

101. *Letters concerning the English Nation*, p. 99. Letter 13.

the Cartesians, whose conservative refusal to admit lower animals to the class of thinking beings¹⁰² is thus briefly stated by Bolingbroke:

DES CARTES, therefore, thought fit to make two other assumptions; one, that since beasts must either not think at all, or have souls like men, whose essence is thought, they should have no souls at all, but be reduced to be material automates. Such he made them: and such they continue among his disciples.¹⁰³

According to the Cartesians brutes were mere machines without any of the qualities of intelligence and reason which, by their theory, were the exclusive property of man and distinguished him from all other forms of life. Bacon, like Descartes, had adopted a cautious opinion regarding brutes, carefully maintaining the honour of mankind by refusing to see any close affinity between the soul of humans and that of animals. "I do not much like," he said, "the confused and promiscuous manner in which philosophers have handled the functions of the soul; as if the human soul differed from the spirit of brutes in degree rather than in kind."¹⁰⁴

The ancient hypothesis that reason separated man and beast entered into a stanza of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* when Guyon said:

See the mind of beastly man,
That hath so soone forgot the excellency
Of his creation, when he life began,
That now he chooseth, with vyle difference,
To be a beast, and lacke intelligence.¹⁰⁵

"Colin Clout" repeats the notion:

But man, that had the sparke of reasons might,
More then the rest to rule his passion,
Chose for his love the fairest in his sight,
Like as himselfe was fairest by creation.¹⁰⁶

^{102.} *Essay*, II, xxvii, 12. See George Boas, *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century*, Baltimore, 1933.

^{103.} *Works*, III, 539.

^{104.} *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning: Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 493.

^{105.} *Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 87.

^{106.} "Colin Clouts Come Home Againe," 867-70.

Spenser's occasional statements that reason distinguishes man from brute have not, however, the controversial quality of the numerous similar assertions in the literature of the Eighteenth Century, when the issue had been brought forcefully to the attention of thoughtful men. Addison, an early leader of the conservatives who refused brutes any reason and believed instinct alone sufficient to account for animal behaviour, expressed his opinion thus:

One would wonder to hear sceptical men disputing for the reason of animals, and telling us it is only our pride and prejudices that will not allow them the use of that faculty.

Reason shows itself in all occurrences of life; whereas the brute makes no discovery of such a talent, but in what immediately regards his own preservation, or the continuance of his species.¹⁰⁷

Perhaps the most ardent defender of the dignity of man's mind was Edward Young, averse to any movement that would facilitate the approach of the brute towards the level of humanity.

I grant the muse
 Has often blusht at her degen'rate sons,
 Retain'd by sense to plead her filthy cause;
 To raise the low, to magnify the mean,
 And subtilize the gross into refin'd:
 As if to magic numbers' powerful charm
 'Twas given, to make a civet of their song
 Obscene, and sweeten ordure to perfume.
 Wit, a true pagan, deifies the brute,
 And lifts our swine-enjoyments from the mire.¹⁰⁸

To prevent any insurgence of the gross, Young denies beasts the power to reason:

Reason is man's peculiar: sense, the brute's.¹⁰⁹

^{107.} *Spectator*, No. 120. Cf. *Guardian*, No. 89: "The same Faculty of Reason and Understanding, which placeth us above the Brute part of the Creation, doth also subject our Minds to greater and more manifold Disquiets than Creatures of an inferior Rank are sensible of."

^{108.} *Night Thoughts*, V, 5-14.

^{109.} *Ibid.*, VII, 1432.

Unallied to lower animals,

. . . men are angels, loaded for an hour,
Who wade this miry vale, and climb with pain,
And slipp'ry step, the bottom of the steep.¹¹⁰

As the cardinal testimony of man's superiority Young offers the fact that Jesus assumed the human shape to be crucified for us. And—

If a God bleeds, he bleeds not for a worm.¹¹¹

The atonement of the Cross was not intended for a being whose qualities of mind are shared by worms and beasts. Isaac Watts was somewhat more generously inclined towards brutes than Addison and Young, though he was usually content to agree with the Cartesians in describing them as "wondrous Machines"¹¹² that perform all their duties and affairs by instinct, i.e. nature, and not by reason and understanding.¹¹³ Avoiding prejudice and dogmatism, however, he records the following:

The late Bishop *Burnet*, who was no indigent Enquirer into various Knowledge, seems to determine . . . that one of these two Opinions is now the Result of the Thoughts of the Learned (*viz.*) that either Brutes are meer Machines, or that they have reasonable Souls. *It is certain*, says he, *that either Beasts have no Thought or Liberty at all, and are only Pieces of finely organized Matter, capable of many subtle Motions that come to them from Objects without them; but that they have no Sensation nor Thought at all about them; or,—But he supposes, that human Nature can hardly receive or bear this Notion, because there are such evident Indications of even high Degrees of Reason among the Beasts;* he concludes therefore, *It is more reasonable to imagine, that there may be Spirits of a lower Order in Beasts, that have in them a Capacity of thinking and chusing; but that it is so entirely under the Impressions of Matter, that they are not capable of that Largeness either of Thought or Liberty, that is necessary to make them capable of Good or Evil, of Rewards and Punishments; and that therefore they may be perpetually rolling about from one Body to another.*¹¹⁴

110. *Night Thoughts*, IV, 537–9.

112. *Philosophical Essays*, Essay IX, sec. 1.

113. *Ibid.*, Essay IX, sec. 6.

111. *Ibid.*, IV, 499.

114. *Ibid.*, Essay IX, sec. 7.

In consequence of Burnet's argument Watts vacillated slightly, uncertain whether or not to ascribe reason to brutes, though in any case he could definitely assert that man has reason and does not operate like a machine. America had a staunch, unbending conservative in the character of the Rev. Samuel Quincy, who declared to his congregation in Charleston that God "has endowed us with Reason and Understanding (Faculties which the Brutes have not) on purpose to contemplate his Beauty and Glory, and to keep our inferior Appetites in due Subjection to his Laws, written in our Hearts."¹¹⁵ Instinct was all that Bishop Butler allowed brutes.

There are several brute creatures of equal, and several of superior strength, to that of men; and possibly the sum of the whole strength of brutes may be greater than that of mankind: but reason gives us the advantage and superiority over them; and thus man is the acknowledged governing animal upon the earth.¹¹⁶

In Boswell's *Life* we find Johnson repeating an argument he had already used in the *Rambler* "against the notion that the brute creation is endowed with the faculty of reason,"¹¹⁷ while in another instance his fine humanism took this amusing expression.

An essay, written by Mr. Deane, a divine of the Church of England, maintaining the future life of brutes, by an explication of certain parts of the scriptures, was mentioned, and the doctrine insisted on by a gentleman who seemed fond of curious speculation. Johnson, who did not like to hear of any thing concerning a future state which was not authorised by the regular canons of orthodoxy, discouraged this talk; and being offended at its continuation, he watched an opportunity to give the gentleman a blow of reprobation. So, when the poor speculist, with a serious metaphysical pensive face, addressed him, "But really, Sir, when we see a very sensible dog, we don't know what to think of him." Johnson, rolling with joy at the thought which beamed in his eye, turned quickly round, and replied, "True, Sir: and when we see a very foolish fellow, we don't know what to think of him."¹¹⁸

If these men appear uncharitable in refusing reason and also immor-

^{115.} Quoted in Carl Becker, *Declaration of Independence*, p. 77.

^{116.} *Analogy*, I, iii, 22. See also II, iii, 14–16.

^{117.} *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, II, 248–9.

^{118.} *Ibid.*, II, 53–4.

tality to brutes, nevertheless the serious consideration they gave to the problem resembles in this late day benevolence itself.

The positive side of this truly dramatic debate was taken by Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Swift, and Pope, for whom the suggestion that brutes had some of man's reason made a perfect holiday. "Absurd and impertinent vanity!" Bolingbroke exclaimed, as he proceeded much further than Locke to link the mind of the beast with that of man.

We pronounce our fellow animals to be automates, or we allow them instinct, or we bestow graciously upon them, at the utmost stretch of liberality, an irrational soul, something we know not what, but something that can claim no kindred to the human mind. We scorn to admit them into the same class of intelligence with ourselves, tho it be obvious, among other observations easy to be made, and tending to the same purpose, that the first inlets, and the first elements of their knowledge, and of ours, are the same. But of ourselves, we think it not too much to boast that our intelligence is a participation of the divine intelligence.¹¹⁹

Voltaire enlisted among the benefactors of the brute by arguing in the same manner.

METHINKS 'tis clearly evident that Beasts cannot be mere Machines, which I prove thus. God has given them the very same Organs of Sensation as to us: If therefore they have no Sensation, God has created a useless Thing; now according to your own Confession God does nothing in vain; he therefore did not create so many Organs of Sensation, merely for them to be uninform'd with this Faculty; consequently Beasts are not mere Machines. . . . Exclaim therefore no more against the sage, the modest Philosophy of Mr. *Locke*, which so far from interfering with Religion, would be of use to demonstrate the Truth of it, in case Religion wanted any such Support.¹²⁰

Since this new philosophy was dedicated to the cause of lower animals, it is no wonder that by Fielding's time "brute" had become the popular name for a philosopher.¹²¹ In this sense Hume was a "brute," for he said "no truth appears to me more evident, than that beasts are endow'd with thought and reason as well as men."¹²²

119. *Works*, III, 352-3.

120. *Letters concerning the English Nation*, pp. 105-06. Letter 13.

121. Fielding, *Covent-Garden Journal*, No. 4.

122. *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, p. 176.

The results of Swift's grant of reason to brutes in *Gulliver's Travels* are so familiar that one need only recall how Gulliver, arriving in the land of the Houyhnhnms with all the prejudices of superior man, "was amazed to see such actions and behaviour in brute beasts, and concluded with myself, that if the inhabitants of this country were endued with a proportionable degree of reason, they must needs be the wisest people upon earth."¹²³ After residing for some time in this country where the ruling class was composed of rational horses and man was a beast without reason or conscience, he was still naïve enough to explain that in his own country the horse had "not the least tincture of reason."¹²⁴ The Houyhnhnms for their part had been equally lofty, believing all men to be without reason, and consequently when Gulliver undertook to learn their language, they "looked upon it as a prodigy that a brute animal should discover such marks of a rational creature."¹²⁵ It was a source of delight for the horses to find in man some unsuspected glimmerings of reason. After balancing the qualities, intellectual and moral, of rational horses and rational men, Gulliver confesses

that the many virtues of those excellent quadrupeds placed in opposite view to human corruptions, had so far opened my eyes and enlarged my understanding, that I began to view the actions and passions of man in a very different light, and to think the honour of my own kind not worth managing.¹²⁶

The brute was so deified by Swift that there was no longer the Spenserian possibility of man's choosing to be a beast and "lacke intelligence," but, on the contrary,

. . . now and then
Beasts may degenerate into men.¹²⁷

Swift's not altogether healthy misanthropy is satirized by Goldsmith in his poem "The Logicians Refuted. In Imitation of Dean Swift," which begins:

123. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, 233.

124. *Ibid.*, VIII, 250.

125. *Ibid.*, VIII, (242).

126. *Ibid.*, VIII, (269).

127. Swift, "Beasts' Confession to the Priest": *Poems*, ed. W. E. Browning, 2 vols., London, 1910, I, 239.

LOGICIANS have but ill defined
As rational, the human Kind;
REASON, they say, belongs to man,
But let them prove it if they can.¹²⁸

Pope had started his sponsorship of the brute in his early poem "Windsor Forest," by asserting that the savage, preying characteristics of animals were not the product of their own ignorance, but were learned from men and "kings more furious and severe" than brutes themselves.

Beasts, urged by us, their fellow-beasts pursue,
And learn of man each other to undo.¹²⁹

The *Essay on Man* later argues that man was noble as long as he remained true to the natural, God-directed instinct he had in common with brutes,¹³⁰ but when he forsook this guidance to rely upon his own reason, evil entered and broke the chain of universal love. Having begun by taking the lives of lower animals, man then, turning upon man, murdered his own species.¹³¹ The triumph of reason over natural instinct brought a corruption in man which later infected and contaminated all scales of animal life, so that this reason that taints all living beings is the glory of none but the confusion of all.

The persistent theme throughout the First Series of Gay's *Fables* is just this age-old, but recently revived, problem of the difference between man and beast, a philosophical question particularly suited to the fable and one which doubtless made for its popularity as a literary form in the Eighteenth Century. In Gay's *Fables* we find expressed that contempt for humanity and admiration of animals which should characterize the writings of one who belonged to the literary circle of Swift and Pope. Man's vicious, preying qualities, his ambition,¹³² his cruelty,¹³³ his greed,¹³⁴ are so fully exposed and his rational qualities so thoroughly challenged and denied¹³⁵ that after reading Gay one would conclude that there was nothing left for a

128. *Works*, ed. Gibbs, II, 76-7.

129. "Windsor Forest," 123-4.

130. *Essay on Man*, III, 91-2.

131. *Ibid.*, III, 168.

132. Fable 4.

133. Fable 5.

134. Fable 6.

135. Fable 41: "Reason in man is meer pretence."

truly intelligent man to do but to turn this world over to the guardianship of animals and become a vegetarian. Considering the trend of philosophy one would be prepared to discover an active vegetarian movement in the Eighteenth Century, but none is apparent. It is probably as Goldsmith's Chinese sage observed:

THE better sort here pretend to the utmost compassion for animals of every kind: to hear them speak, a stranger would be apt to imagine they could hardly hurt the gnat that stung them; they seem so tender, and so full of pity, that one would take them for the harmless friends of the whole creation; the protectors of the meanest insect or reptile that was privileged with existence. And yet (would you believe it?) I have seen the very men who have thus boasted of their tenderness, at the same time devouring the flesh of six different animals tossed up in a fricassee.¹³⁶

Any carefully calculated theory which allots to animals a share of man's intellectual power is perhaps ugly and repulsive, but when the theoretical element of this philosophy is disguised or forgotten in an attitude of unprincipled kindness and respect for all living beings, then we are attracted. Sterne, who busied himself about most problems of the mind, was apparently never concerned with the reasoning capacities of animals, though his consideration for these creatures reveals itself constantly, now in Uncle Toby's soliloquy on a fly,¹³⁷ again in pathetic lamentations for a dead donkey, a beast so loved by and so loving his master, that when the two were by chance separated for days, neither could eat or drink till they met again.¹³⁸ Such sentimental expressions descend from Locke's philosophy rather than from Descartes, who refused not only reason to these machines but also every other faculty belonging to man, even the sense of feeling. The Cartesian attitude may be contrasted with Sterne's gentle regard for animals by the following unbelievable anecdote:

M. de Fontenelle contoit qu'un jour étant allé voir Malebranche aux PP. de l'Oratoire de la Rue St. Honoré, une grosse chienne de la maison, et qui étoit pleine, entra dans la salle où ils se promenoient, vint caresser le P. Malebranche, et se rouler à ses pieds. Après quelques mouvements inutiles pour la chasser, le philosophe lui donna un grand coup de pied,

^{136.} *Citizen of the World*, Letter 15.

^{137.} *Tristram Shandy*, bk. II, cap. 12: ed. Cross, p. 88.

^{138.} *Sentimental Journey*, "Nampont—The Dead Ass": ed. Cross, p. 70.

qui fit jettter à la chienne un cri de douleur, et à M. de Fontenelle un cri de compassion. Eh quoi (lui dit froidement le P. Malebranche) ne sçavez vous pas bien que cela ne se sent point?¹³⁹

This Cartesian position Mandeville himself had maintained in his first work, *De Brutorum Operationibus* (1689),¹⁴⁰ but later in the *Fable of the Bees* he turned quite violently against this younger opinion, as we see when, after a vivid and painful description of the slaughter of a bullock, he thus addresses the reader:

When a Creature has given such convincing and undeniable Proofs of the Terrors upon him, and the Pains and Agonies he feels, is there a Follower of *Descartes* so inur'd to Blood, as not to refute, by his Commiseration, the Philosophy of that vain Reasoner?¹⁴¹

Though all animals may have profited by the bequest of reason from Locke and such thinkers, the chief beneficiary was none other than the well-deserving elephant, whose remarkable appearance of intelligence, noted in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*,¹⁴² frequently won for it the title of "half-reasoning." Pope, rising to the vocative, speaks:

How instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
Compared, half-reas'ning elephant, with thine!¹⁴³

The phrase was passed on by Bolingbroke when he remarked that "there are stupid savages, of whom it seems lawful to doubt, whether they are able to make greater discoveries concerning God and religion, than the half reasoning elephant."¹⁴⁴ A memorable personality is that wise elephant of Gay's tenth fable who enters a bookshop and finds there a book written by man on the wisdom of elephants. To the elephant it seems highly irrational that one species should presume to weigh the intellectual powers of another. This opinion he expresses audibly, and then picks up a volume of Greek which he proceeds to glance through casually until interrupted by the bookseller who has been so impressed with the elephant's apparent learning that he im-

139. The Abbé Trublet, quoted in Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, 375.

140. *Fable of the Bees*, ed. Kaye, I, cv-cvi.

141. *Ibid.*, I, 181.

143. *Essay on Man*, I, 221-2.

142. *Essay*, III, vi, 26.

144. *Works*, IV, 71.

mediately asks him to write a book against the Trinity! Whereupon the elephant politely reminds the bookseller that one species is incapable of criticizing the beliefs of another, and forthwith leaves the shop.¹⁴⁵ To these testimonies of proboscidian wisdom Thomson would add his sanction.

Peaceful beneath primeval trees that cast
Their ample shade o'er Niger's yellow stream,
And where the Ganges rolls his sacred wave,
Or mid the central depth of blackening woods,
High-raised in solemn theatre around,
Leans the huge elephant—wisest of brutes!
Oh, truly wise! with gentle might endowed,
Though powerful not destructive!¹⁴⁶

The superior rational talents of this well-poised elephant are finally and fully explained by the Shandean philosophy of noses. "Why is the elephant the wisest of animals, but because he has so long a trunk?"¹⁴⁷

In ascribing some reason to brutes Locke intended to show that man's mind differed from that of lower animals in degree rather than in kind and that a higher reasoning faculty, implying an ability to abstract and have general ideas, is "that which puts a perfect distinction betwixt man and brutes, and is an excellency which the faculties of brutes do by no means attain to."¹⁴⁸ Higher reasoning powers are sufficient to account for the other numerous distinctions which have been established between man and beast. Listed by Shaftesbury as man's chief intellectual characteristics which raise him above the degree of brutes are "*Freedom of Reason* in the Learned World, and good Government and *Liberty* in the Civil World,"¹⁴⁹ a statement to be compared with a speech in the *Beggar's Opera*: "Lions, Wolves, and Vulturs don't live together in herds, droves or flocks.—Of all animals of prey, man is the only sociable one."¹⁵⁰ Elsewhere Shaftesbury has said that brutes differ from man for want

145. *Fables*, First Series, No. 10.

146. *Summer*, 716-23.

147. John Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne*, London, 1798, p. 110.

148. *Essay*, II, xi, 10.

149. *Several Letters Written by a Noble Lord to a Young Man at the University*, p. 8. Letter of May 10, 1707.

150. Act III, sc. ii.

of a sense of beauty,¹⁵¹ which is his way of saying that they have no moral consciousness. To Shaftesbury all virtuous actions are aesthetically beautiful and all vicious actions ugly, wherefore the brute, having no idea of beauty, accordingly cannot distinguish right from wrong. Goldsmith with more wisdom asserts that memory and purpose mark the dividing line between man and brute.

A remembrance of what is past, and an anticipation of what is to come, seem to be the two faculties by which man differs most from other animals. Though brutes enjoy them in a limited degree, yet their whole life seems taken up in the present, regardless of the past and the future.¹⁵²

Sorrow is another individual trait of human beings, according to Edward Young.

Irrationals all sorrow are beneath,
That noble gift! that privilege of man!¹⁵³

And, on the other hand, Addison says, "If we may believe our logicians, man is distinguished from all other creatures by the faculty of laughter."¹⁵⁴ Fielding asserts that the active principle to do what is right "may perhaps be said to constitute the most essential barrier between us and our neighbours the brutes,"¹⁵⁵ a discrimination closely allied to the explanation in the *Anti-Lucretius*, that free will is

That right which Man distinguishes from Brute.¹⁵⁶

Religion as a dividing line was recorded by Locke himself, though he adds, "Religion, which should most distinguish us from beasts, and ought most peculiarly to elevate us, as rational creatures, above brutes, is that wherein men often appear most irrational, and more senseless than beasts themselves."¹⁵⁷ Earlier Milton had said that God's image is "not imparted to the Brute,"¹⁵⁸ and later Young exclaimed:

Religion's all! . . .
Religion! the sole voucher man is man,¹⁵⁹

151. *Characteristics*, ed. Robertson, II, 143.

152. *Citizen of the World*, Letter 44.

153. *Night Thoughts*, V, 558-9.

154. *Spectator*, No. 494.

155. *Tom Jones*, bk. IV, cap. 6: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 176.

156. *Anti-Lucretius*, p. 418.

157. *Essay*, IV, xviii, 11.

158. *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 441.

159. *Night Thoughts*, IV, 551, 554.

while in Bolingbroke we read the statement of Bishop Wilkins, that "the things which distinguish human nature from all other things are the chief principles and foundations of religion, namely, the apprehension of a deity, and an expectation of a future state after this life, which no other creature below man doth partake of."¹⁶⁰ Similar piety marks Wesley's answer to the question:

What is the barrier between men and brutes,—the line which they cannot pass? It is not reason. Set aside that ambiguous term; exchange it for the plain word understanding, and who can deny that brutes have this? We may as well deny that they have sight or hearing. But it is this: man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not.¹⁶¹

Rasselas, watching the goats browsing among the rocks of the Happy Valley and asking himself how he differs from them, concludes that, while like them he thirsts for a drink from the stream and hungers for food, unlike them he passes tedious and gloomy hours longing for those things "for which this place affords no gratification."¹⁶² Although Locke would allow as valid these several distinctions between man and brute, freedom of will, civil government, sorrow, laughter, morality, as well as the several expressions of religion, he would credit them all to man's superior reasoning power rather than to the faculty of reason itself, traces of which are discoverable in inferior living beings.

The problem of the mental characteristics of brutes, like the distinction between wit and judgment, arose in connection with Locke's discussion of the simple ideas received from reflection. Previously we glanced at his treatment of the simple ideas belonging to sensation. To these now is added a third group of simple ideas, conveyed to the mind by both sensation and reflection.¹⁶³ Power is an example of a simple idea having this dual source, for we may observe by reflection the power within our minds to will, and by sensation we recognize the power one material body has to affect another.¹⁶⁴ Other ideas derived from both sensation and reflection are unity, existence, and

^{160.} *Works*, IV, 70–1.

^{161.} Quoted in Southey, *Life of Wesley*, ed. M. H. Fitzgerald, 2 vols., Oxford, 1925, II, 74.

^{162.} Johnson, *Rasselas*, cap. 2: ed. Chapman, pp. 14–15.

^{163.} *Essay*, II, vii.

^{164.} *Essay*, II, vii, 8.

succession. But the most universal simple ideas constantly presented to our minds and bodies are pleasure and its opposite pain, one or the other of which "join themselves to almost all our ideas both of sensation and reflection."¹⁶⁵ This truly mysterious association of pleasure and pain with all our ideas Locke believed to be the design of "the infinite wise Author of our being," that we might be urged to action, for if they

were wholly separated from all our outward sensations, and inward thoughts, we should have no reason to prefer one thought or action to another; negligence to attention, or motion to rest. And so we should neither stir our bodies, nor employ our minds, but let our thoughts (if I may so call it) run adrift, without any direction or design, and suffer the ideas of our minds, like unregarded shadows, to make their appearances there, as it happened, without attending to them.¹⁶⁶

In addition to their function as incentives to activity, pleasure and pain bear with them a higher significance.

Beyond all this, we may find another reason why God hath scattered up and down several degrees of pleasure and pain, in all the things that environ and affect us; and blended them together in almost all that our thoughts and senses have to do with;—that we, finding imperfection, dissatisfaction, and want of complete happiness, in all the enjoyments which the creatures can afford us, might be led to seek it in the enjoyment of Him with whom there is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.¹⁶⁷

Addison twice remembered this thought, once expressing it in his own phrases,¹⁶⁸ and again repeating Locke's words for the comfort of the readers of the *Spectator* haunted by the demon melancholy that seemed to come to England "in an easterly wind."¹⁶⁹

With this brief survey of simple ideas, some, like solidity, arising from sensation, others, like perception, originating in reflection, and still more produced, like the ideas of pleasure and pain, by both sensation and reflection, we come then to that statement which is Locke's clearest proof of the limitations of human understanding, namely, that these simple ideas are the foundations of all the knowl-

165. *Essay*, II, vii, 2.

166. *Essay*, II, vii, 3.

167. *Essay*, II, vii, 5.

168. *Spectator*, No. 413.

169. *Ibid.*, No. 387.

edge of which man is capable. Our furthest-reaching thoughts and most complex ideas, our dreams and guesses, contain in them nothing more than several of the simple ideas received by sensation and reflection.

All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that great extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which *sense or reflection* have offered for its contemplation.¹⁷⁰

If our wisdom will not reach beyond the combinations and variations that are possible for these simple ideas, still Locke assures us that we are not to feel hampered or confined by this restriction.

Nor let any one think these too narrow bounds for the capacious mind of man to expatiate in, which takes its flight further than the stars, and cannot be confined by the limits of the world; that extends its thoughts often even beyond the utmost expansion of Matter, and makes excursions into that incomprehensible Inane. . . . Nor will it be so strange to think these few simple ideas sufficient to employ the quickest thought, or largest capacity; and to furnish the materials of all that various knowledge, and more various fancies and opinions of all mankind, if we consider how many words may be made out of the various composition of twenty-four letters; or if, going one step further, we will but reflect on the variety of combinations that may be made with barely one of the above-mentioned ideas, viz. number, whose stock is inexhaustible and truly infinite: and what a large and immense field doth extension alone afford the mathematicians?¹⁷¹

Through the remainder of the second book of the *Essay* Locke undertakes to prove his thesis, that complex ideas contain in them nothing more than several simple ideas derived from sensation and reflection. Although this theory in itself is not difficult, the analysis of complex ideas into their constituent simple ideas brings us to some of the most involved parts of the *Essay*. Locke himself realized that the simplicity of his philosophy might be too often confounded with the difficulty of the logic, and therefore urged his readers not to "stick in the incidents," but to strive for a comprehensive view of the work in its

^{170.} *Essay*, II, i, 24.

^{171.} *Essay*, II, vii, 10.

main design, which "lies in a little compass."¹⁷² If these chapters before us had no consequence whatsoever in literature, the easy, comprehensive view, that all complex ideas are limited by simple ideas, might suffice. But the discovery in literature of some concentrated attention to important conceptions contained in this part of the *Essay* rewards one for proceeding with a slight summary of Locke's remarkable account of the origin of complex ideas.

Of the four types of complex ideas, the first are named simple modes,

which are only variations, or different combinations of the same simple idea, without the mixture of any other;—as a dozen, or score; which are nothing but the ideas of so many distinct units added together, and . . . contained within the bounds of one simple idea.¹⁷³

Thus the simple idea of unity, coming from both sensation and reflection, provides all the complex ideas, or modes, of number: "by adding one to one, we have the complex idea of a couple; by putting twelve units together, we have the complex idea of a dozen; and so of a score, or a million, or any other number."¹⁷⁴ That two is a complex idea of the simple idea of unity, got from sensation and reflection, is an easy and accurate illustration of Locke's entire theory of the formation of complex ideas. Unity is the basis for all numbers as well as two, and is likewise the foundation for our idea of infinity since the "*endless addition* or *addibility* (if any one like the word better) of numbers, so apparent to the mind, is that, I think, which gives us the clearest and most distinct idea of infinity."¹⁷⁵ The complex ideas of number, to repeat, are called simple modes because they are combinations of the same simple idea of unity without the mixture of any other.

The simple idea of space, conveyed to the understanding by the sense of touch and sight, furnishes the many complex ideas of figure, since every figure, just as the shape of each letter on this page, is nothing but a termination of space, or, in other words, a circumscribed space.¹⁷⁶ Consequently the limitless number of existing and imaginable figures are all modifications of the simple idea of space

172. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 12, n. 2.

173. *Essay*, II, xii, 5.

174. *Essay*, II, xvi, 2.

175. *Essay*, II, xvi, 8.

176. *Essay*, II, xiii, 5.

sensation has given us. Furthermore every idea of place, since it is determined by the space between any thing and two or more bodies,¹⁷⁷ is founded upon this simple idea. Because we have only a working idea of place for indicating the position of things in this world, and do not know the actual place of the universe "in the undistinguishable inane of infinite space,"¹⁷⁸ Locke denies that we have any real knowledge of place, thereby depriving man of another supposed possession of his mind. This same efficient simple idea of space furnishes all the complex ideas of distance which man has marked with the convenient lengths of feet, yards, and miles. "The power of repeating or doubling any idea we have of any distance, and adding it to the former as often as we will, without being ever able to come to any stop or stint, let us enlarge it as much as we will, is that which gives us the idea of *immensity*."¹⁷⁹ We advance by the same manner from immensity to the idea of infinite space, merely by taking a certain stated unit or part of the simple idea of space and repeating it in our minds until we see that we can reach no end. Since our idea of infinity is "*an endless growing idea*,"¹⁸⁰ it becomes impossible for human intelligence to possess a positive idea of any *thing* infinite. Knowing that infinity means an endless progression, we therefore realize that an endlessly progressing *thing* is an idea that cannot be held positively in a finite mind.¹⁸¹

So that what lies beyond our positive idea *towards* infinity, lies in obscurity, and has the indeterminate confusion of a negative idea, wherein I know I neither do nor can comprehend all I would, it being too large for a finite and narrow capacity.¹⁸²

For our present purpose it is not so important to remember that the human understanding can possess no real idea of place or infinity, as it is to observe that these complex ideas, or modes, along with that of distance and immensity, are nothing more than combinations and variations of the simple idea of space that originates in sensation.

All complex ideas, or modes, of time are derived from the simple idea of duration, got from reflection in a manner Locke explains most interestingly.

177. *Essay*, II, xiii, 7.

178. *Essay*, II, xiii, 10.

179. *Essay*, II, xiii, 4.

180. *Essay*, II, xvii, 7.

181. *Essay*, II, xvii, 8.

182. *Essay*, II, xvii, 15.

It is evident to any one who will but observe what passes in his own mind, that there is a train of ideas which constantly succeed one another in his understanding, as long as he is awake. Reflection on these appearances of several ideas one after another in our minds, is that which furnishes us with the idea of *succession*: and the distance between any parts of that succession, or between the appearance of any two ideas in our minds, is that we call *duration*. . . .

That we have our notion of succession and duration from this original, viz. from reflection on the train of ideas, which we find to appear one after another in our own minds, seems plain to me, in that we have no perception of duration but by considering the train of ideas that take their turns in our understandings. When that succession of ideas ceases, our perception of duration ceases with it; which every one clearly experiments in himself, whilst he sleeps soundly, whether an hour or a day, a month or a year; of which duration of things, while he sleeps or thinks not, he has no perception at all, but it is quite lost to him; and the moment wherein he leaves off to think, till the moment he begins to think again, seems to him to have no distance. And so I doubt not it would be to a waking man, if it were possible for him to keep *only one* idea in his mind, without variation and the succession of others. And we see, that one who fixes his thoughts very intently on one thing, so as to take but little notice of the succession of ideas that pass in his mind, whilst he is taken up with that earnest contemplation, lets slip out of his account a good part of that duration, and thinks that time shorter than it is.¹⁸³

The latter part of this passage is quoted, not literally, but with some simplification, in the ninety-fourth issue of the *Spectator*. Addison often borrowed detached pieces from the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* for the purpose of introducing a paper, but in the writings of Sterne Locke's philosophy has more than a casual significance. If November 5, 1718, Tristram's birthday, seems interminably long, it is because the author was conscientiously following a very realistic time scheme, based upon Locke's idea of duration.

It is about an hour and a half's tolerable good reading since my uncle Toby rung the bell, when Obadiah was ordered to saddle a horse, and go for Dr. Slop, the man-midwife;—so that no one can say, with reason, that I have not allowed Obadiah time enough, poetically speaking, and considering the emergency too, both to go and come;—though, morally and truly speaking, the man perhaps has scarce had time to get on his boots.

183. *Essay*, II, xiv, 3, 4.

If the hypercritic will go upon this; and is resolved after all to take a pendulum, and measure the true distance betwixt the ringing of the bell, and the rap at the door;—and, after finding it to be no more than two minutes, thirteen seconds, and three fifths,—should take upon him to insult over me for such a breach in the unity, or rather probability of time;—I would remind him, that the idea of duration, and of its simple modes, is got merely from the train and succession of our ideas,—and this is the true scholastic pendulum—and by which, as a scholar, I will be tried in this matter,—abjuring and detesting the jurisdiction of all other pendulums whatever.¹⁸⁴

Before drawing any conclusions from this contradictory statement, it must first be explained that there has not been one and a half hours' tolerable good reading since Obadiah was ordered to go for Dr. Slop. Instead Sterne has given us just a page or two, a few minutes' reading at the most, which would in no case represent time enough for Obadiah to fetch Dr. Slop, had he not met the man-midwife just outside Shandy-Hall as he was starting for his home eight miles away. His return after two minutes and thirteen and three-fifths seconds tolerable good reading is therefore explicable. If we now examine the time scheme of *Tristram Shandy* in the light of this passage, we shall see that it was Sterne's prodigious intention to make his novel temporally realistic to the minute by providing the reader with one hour's reading for every waking hour in the life of his hero, a program he completed with considerable care and success—through the first day. On Tristram's birthday Dr. Slop arrives on page 97 (I am using the little Oxford World's Classics edition of *Tristram Shandy* in counting the pages), and on page 169 Sterne informs us that the Doctor has been at the house two hours and ten minutes. These seventy-two pages then would take supposedly two hours and ten minutes to pass as a succession of ideas through the reader's mind. In like fashion the first day of Tristram's life ends on page 260, which 260 pages would conceivably take one day to pass as a succession of ideas through the reader's mind. According to this schedule it would have required 94,900 pages to cover a single year of Tristram's existence. If the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* had been completed at this rate, assuming that Tristram lived to three score and ten, they would have filled 6,643,000 pages or 11,202 volumes the size of the

^{184.} *Tristram Shandy*, bk. II, cap. 8: ed. Cross, p. 80.

present *Life and Opinions*, which may explain why at the end of his account of Tristram's first day Sterne paused for a moment to express his despair of ever completing a definitive *Life*.

Part of the train of ideas marking time in the reader's mind on Tristram's birthday are two complete chapters concerning Locke's idea of time, in which the pedantic Mr. Shandy and Uncle Toby present duration and its entire brood of complex ideas in their finest philosophical array.

Book III. Chapter 18.

It is two hours, and ten minutes—and no more—cried my father, looking at his watch, since Dr. Slop and Obadiah arrived—and I know not how it happens, brother Toby—but to my imagination it seems almost an age.

—Here—pray, Sir, take hold of my cap—nay, take the bell along with it, and my pantoufles too.

Now, Sir, they are all at your service; and I freely make you a present of 'em, on condition you give me all your attention to this chapter.

Though my father said, "he knew not how it happened,"—yet he knew very well how it happened;—and at the instant he spoke it, was pre-determined in his mind to give my uncle Toby a clear account of the matter by a metaphysical dissertation upon the subject of duration and its simple modes, in order to show my uncle Toby by what mechanism and mensurations in the brain it came to pass, that the rapid succession of their ideas, and the eternal scampering of the discourse from one thing to another, since Dr. Slop had come into the room, had lengthened out so short a period to so inconceivable an extent.—"I know not how it happens—cried my father,—but it seems an age."

—"Tis owing entirely, quoth my uncle Toby, to the succession of our ideas.

My father, who had an itch, in common with all philosophers, of reasoning upon every thing which happened, and accounting for it too—proposed infinite pleasure to himself in this, of the succession of ideas, and had not the least apprehension of having it snatched out of his hands by my uncle Toby, who (honest man!) generally took every thing as it happened;—and who, of all things in the world, troubled his brain the least with abstruse thinking;—the ideas of time and space—or how we came by those ideas—or of what stuff they were made—or whether they were born with us—or we picked them up afterwards as we went along—or whether we did it in frocks—or not till we had got into breeches—with

a thousand other inquiries and disputes about Infinity, Prescience, Liberty, Necessity, and so forth, upon whose desperate and unconquerable theories so many fine heads have been turned and cracked—never did my uncle Toby's the least injury at all; my father knew it—and was no less surprised than he was disappointed, with my uncle's fortuitous solution.

Do you understand the theory of that affair? replied my father.

Not I, quoth my uncle.

—But you have some ideas, said my father, of what you talk about?—

No more than my horse, replied my uncle Toby.

Gracious heaven! cried my father, looking upwards, and clasping his two hands together—there is a worth in thy honest ignorance, brother Toby—'twere almost a pity to exchange it for a knowledge.—But I'll tell thee.—

To understand what time is aright, without which we never can comprehend infinity, insomuch as one is a portion of the other—we ought seriously to sit down and consider what idea it is we have of duration, so as to give a satisfactory account how we came by it.—What is that to any body? quoth my uncle Toby. For if you will turn your eyes inwards upon your mind, continued my father, and observe attentively, you will perceive, brother, that whilst you and I are talking together, and thinking, and smoking our pipes, or whilst we receive successively ideas in our minds, we know that we do exist, and so we estimate the existence, or the continuation of the existence of ourselves, or any thing else, commensurate to the succession of any ideas in our minds, the duration of ourselves, or any such other thing co-existing with our thinking—and so according to that preconceived—You puzzle me to death, cried my uncle Toby.

—'Tis owing to this, replied my father, that in our computations of time, we are so used to minutes, hours, weeks, and months—and of clocks (I wish there was not a clock in the kingdom) to measure out their several portions to us, and to those who belong to us—that 'twill be well, if in time to come, the succession of our ideas be of any use or service to us at all.

Now, whether we observe it or no, continued my father, in every sound man's head, there is a regular succession of ideas of one sort or other, which follow each other in train just like—A train of artillery? said my uncle Toby—A train of a fiddle-stick!—quoth my father—which follow and succeed one another in our minds at certain distances, just like the images in the inside of a lanthorn turned round by the heat of a candle.—I declare, quoth my uncle Toby, mine are more like a smoke-jack.—Then, brother Toby, I have nothing more to say to you upon the subject, said my father.

Book III. Chapter 19.

—WHAT a conjecture was here lost!—My father in one of his best explanatory moods—in eager pursuit of a metaphysical point into the very regions, where clouds and thick darkness would soon have encompassed it about;—my uncle Toby in one of the finest dispositions for it in the world; his head like a smoke-jack;—the funnel unswept, and the ideas whirling round and round about in it, all obfuscated and darkened over with fuliginous matter!—By the tombstone of Lucian—if it is in being—if not, why then by his ashes! by the ashes of my dear Rabelais, and dearer Cervantes!—my father and my uncle Toby's discourse upon Time and Eternity—was a discourse devoutly to be wished for! and the petulancy of my father's humour, in putting a stop to it as he did, was a robbery of the Ontologic Treasury of such a jewel, as no coalition of great occasions and great men are ever likely to restore to it again.

To return now to Locke, who may be thankful that all minds do not function like Uncle Toby's, men have divided duration into certain periods designated by the name of time. Since the most expedient measure of time is that which separates duration into apparently equal portions, the diurnal and annual appearances of the sun have been taken as the standard of duration, though any periodical event might serve as well to mark duration.

For a fit of an ague; the sense of hunger or thirst; a smell or a taste; or any other idea returning constantly at equidistant periods, and making itself universally be taken notice of, would not fail to measure out the course of succession, and distinguish the distances of time.¹⁸⁵

Therefore days and years, and time itself, since they are not essential to duration, become merely complex ideas, or modes, developed out of a simple idea for the conveniences of human life. Through adding together in our minds certain arbitrary lengths of duration, such as days and years, we arrive at the idea of eternity:

by being able to repeat ideas of any length of time, as of a minute, a year, or an age, as often as we will in our own thoughts, and adding them one to another, without ever coming to the end of such addition, any nearer than we can to the end of number, to which we can always add; we come by the idea of *eternity*.¹⁸⁶

185. *Essay*, II, xiv, 20.

186. *Essay*, II, xiv, 31.

While we know in this way that eternity is endless duration, for possessing a positive idea of any *thing* eternal our apprehensions are too weak.¹⁸⁷ This is, however, an incidental observation, and Locke's chief argument can be summarized in a sentence: the complex ideas, or modes, of time and eternity, originate in the simple idea of duration we discover by reflecting upon the succession of ideas in our own minds.

Pain and pleasure, already cited as simple ideas arising constantly from sensation and reflection, provide the great variety of complex ideas that come under the name of passions, love, desire, joy, hope and the like being nothing more than variations of the one simple idea of pleasure, while out of pain evolve the passions of hatred, sorrow, fear, despair, anger, and envy.¹⁸⁸ Pope's compact line,

Modes of self-love the passions we may call,¹⁸⁹

agrees exactly with this precise definition of the passions if we will interpret "self-love" to mean our natural desire for pleasure and aversion to pain. Locke's brief, shivering discussion of the passions, classifying each as a variation of the idea of pleasure or pain, is perhaps that part of the *Essay* which impresses one most with the possibilities inherent in simple ideas. When just two such ideas are sufficient to account for all the complex manifestations of human emotion, it is no wonder that all knowledge is reducible to simple ideas.

Power is another simple idea, discovered by sensation from seeing the effects produced upon one physical body by another, and by reflection from observing that our will "can at pleasure move several parts of our bodies which were at rest."¹⁹⁰ Having explained the origin of this idea, Locke then discusses the numerous complex ideas that are built upon it, for example, the idea of liberty, which is no more than the physical power to do what the mind has the mental power to will.¹⁹¹ As there is no immediate advantage to be had in considering more fully Locke's difficult chapter on power further

187. *Essay*, II, xvii, 16.

188. *Essay*, II, xx. Cf. Pope, *Essay on Man*, II, 117-18:

"Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasures smiling train,
Hate, fear, and grief, the family of pain."

189. *Essay on Man*, II, 93.

190. *Essay*, II, vii, 8.

191. *Essay*, II, xxi, 15.

than to suggest that all motions of body and mind both arise and terminate in this single simple idea, liberty may stand as a satisfactory example of a complex idea, or mode, originating in the simple idea of power which sensation and reflection have furnished.

A second group of complex ideas, called notions, concerns most intimately our social life, for it includes all the ideas relating to human conduct, or, more literally, men's ways of thinking and doing. To illustrate that our notions regarding behaviour contain in them nothing more than several simple ideas, we may take as an instance the complex idea called a "lie." The notion

which the word *lie* stands for is made of these simple ideas:—(1) Articulate sounds. (2) Certain ideas in the mind of the speaker. (3) Those words the signs of those ideas. (4) Those signs put together, by affirmation or negation, otherwise than the ideas they stand for are in the mind of the speaker.¹⁹²

Locke's careful analysis of the simple ideas that unite to form the notion of a lie is perhaps made sport of by Swift in the following passage from the "Voyage to the Houyhnhnms."

I remember in frequent discourses with my master concerning the nature of manhood, in other parts of the world, having occasion to talk of *lying* and *false representation*, it was with much difficulty that he comprehended what I meant, although he had otherwise a most acute judgment. For he argued thus: that the use of speech was to make us understand one another, and to receive information of facts; now if any one said the thing which was not, these ends were defeated; because I cannot properly be said to understand him; and I am so far from receiving information, that he leaves me worse than in ignorance, for I am led to believe a thing black when it is white, and short when it is long. And these were all the notions he had concerning that faculty of *lying*, so perfectly well understood, and so universally practised, among human creatures.¹⁹³

Swift's rather heavy satire proposes to remind us that we can know very well what a lie is without understanding the constituent parts of this notion, though it was Locke's primary task to isolate the simple ideas contained in a complex idea. All other notions concerning

192. *Essay*, II, xxii, 9.

193. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, (248).

conduct like boldness, revenge, testiness, drunkenness, kindness, and mercy are also complex ideas, composed by the actions of men's minds from contemplating several simple ideas. In the first of the *Moral Essays* Pope has written, "Maxims are drawn from notions."¹⁹⁴ Since notions, such as a lie, are complex ideas referring to conduct, maxims, which may be considered general truths regarding conduct, are quite naturally concerned with these notions. From the same *Moral Essay* one may take an example of a maxim drawn from the notion of a lie:

. . . in the cunning, truth itself's a lie.¹⁹⁵

Pope's accuracy, judged by Locke, in asserting that maxims are drawn from notions, provides a memorable pleasure for those of us who are surprised to find the bard of Twickenham performing so faithfully in the remote fastnesses of philosophy.

Substances comprise a third group of complex ideas, framed wholly out of the simple ideas received by sensation. Of the several ideas we include in material substance, those that are real and would exist whether they were perceived or not,¹⁹⁶ are solidity, extension, figure, and mobility, the primary qualities of matter. Several other ideas we attach to substance, having no real counterpart in matter, are entirely the results produced by the sensation of substance in the human mind.¹⁹⁷ Colour, sound, taste, heat are all such secondary qualities of substance that have no reality in outward objects and exist only in the minds of living beings.¹⁹⁸ The distinction between primary and secondary qualities of substance, which was peculiarly

194. *Moral Essays*, I, 14.

195. *Ibid.*, I, 68.

196. *Essays*, II, xxiii, 9.

197. The ideas produced in us by substance are called accidents (Locke, *Essay*, II, xxiii, 2), easily remembered by the burlesque in *Martinus Scriblerus*: "When he was told a substance was that which was subject to accidents; then soldiers (quoth Crambe) are the most substantial people in the world" (Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 308).

198. Cf. *Martinus Scriblerus*: "At the same time he warned Martin, that what he now learned as a logician, he must forget as a natural philosopher; that though he now taught them that accidents inhered in the subject, they would find in time that there was no such thing; and that colour, taste, smell, heat, and cold, were not in the things, but only phantasms of our brains" (Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 308-09).

suggestive to the literary mind, appears much improved and ornamented in the pages of the *Spectator*.

Things would make but a poor appearance to the eye, if we saw them only in their proper figures and motions. And what reason can we assign for their exciting in us many of those ideas which are different from anything that exists in the objects themselves (for such are light and colours), were it not to add supernumerary ornaments to the universe, and make it more agreeable to the imagination? We are everywhere entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions, we discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out upon the whole creation; but what a rough unsightly sketch of Nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and the several distinctions of light and shade vanish? In short, our souls are at present delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion, and we walk about like the enchanted hero of a romance, who sees beautiful castles, woods, and meadows; and at the same time hears the warbling of birds, and the purling of streams; but upon the finishing of some secret spell, the fantastic scene breaks up, and the disconsolate knight finds himself on a barren heath, or in a solitary desert.¹⁹⁹

Following this imaginative picture of the beauty emanating from the secondary qualities of matter, Addison concludes:

I have here supposed that my reader is acquainted with that great modern discovery, which is at present universally acknowledged by all the inquirers into natural philosophy, namely, that light and colours, as apprehended by the imagination, are only ideas in the mind, and not qualities that have any existence in matter. As this is a truth which has been proved uncontestedly by many modern philosophers, and is indeed one of the finest speculations in that science, if the English reader would see the notion explained at large, he may find it in the eighth chapter of the second book of Mr. Locke's "Essay on Human Understanding."

Nowhere in Locke's chapter on substance, however, will one find anything so poetically expressive as Addison's allegory of the enchanted hero of romance, delighting in a world made beautiful by the unreal qualities of outward objects. A merry, but equally enlightening treatment of the secondary attributes of substance is an account

199. *Spectator*, No. 413.

in the *Guardian* of the performances of Jack Lizard at his return home after a year and a half's residence in the university.

For the first Week he dealt wholly in Paradoxes. It was a common Jest with him to pinch one of his Sister's Lap-Dogs, and afterwards prove he could not feel it. When the Girls were sorting a Set of Knots, he would demonstrate to them that all the Ribbands were of the same Colour; or rather, says *Jack*, of no Colour at all. My Lady *Lizard* her self, though she was not a little pleas'd with her Son's Improvements, was one Day almost angry with him; for having accidentally burnt her Fingers as she was lighting the Lamp for her Tea-pot; in the midst of her Anguish, *Jack* laid hold of the Opportunity to instruct her that there was no such thing as Heat in Fire.²⁰⁰

The distinction between primary and secondary qualities, applied thus to substance, was easily transferred to other matters, so that there were, I suppose, few subjects of Eighteenth-Century thought that did not lend themselves to this division. Addison, for instance, separates the pleasures of imagination into primary and secondary classes.²⁰¹ In our quest to discover the ruling passions in men Pope warns against believing a secondary passion to be the prime one.

In this search, the wisest may mistake,
If second qualities for first they take.²⁰²

In a sermon of Sterne we are urged to distinguish carefully between the primary and secondary qualities of religion lest we yield to the general tendency to construe pomp, or appearance, for inner worth, or substance.

This is so evident, that even in our own church, where there is the greatest chastity in things of this nature—and of which none are retained in our worship, but what I believe, tend to excite and assist it—yet so strong a propensity is there in our nature to sense—and so unequal a match is the understanding of the bulk of mankind, for the impressions of outward things—that we see thousands who every day mistake the shadow for the substance, and was it fairly put to the trial would exchange the reality for the appearance.²⁰³

200. *Guardian*, No. 24.

201. *Spectator*, No. 411.

202. *Moral Essays*, I, 210–11.

203. "Pharisee and Publican": *Sermons*, I, 79.

The physical distinction established by Locke and others between the qualities of matter accustomed men's minds to think in terms of primary and secondary.

In concluding his discussion of substance Locke asserts that, while we possess ideas of some of the qualities of matter, we do not know exactly what holds these several qualities together, "the idea . . . to which we give the *general* name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist *sine re substante*."²⁰⁴ The *Essay* strengthens its argument by reducing the Latin *substantio* into the plain English equivalent, "under-propping," which all will agree is a very obscure idea.²⁰⁵ We might here turn to *Martinus Scriblerus* and read:

This brings into my mind a project to banish metaphysics out of Spain, which it was supposed might be effectuated by this method: that nobody should use any compound or decompound of the substantial verbs, but as they are read in the common conjugations: for everybody will allow, that if you debar a metaphysician from *ens*, *essentia*, *substantia*, etc. there is an end of him.²⁰⁶

By revealing what an imperfect and uncertain idea we have of that "under-propping" which supports the qualities of matter, Locke has practically done away with substance.

Of spiritual substance we likewise have some ideas but no perfect knowledge. Having learned by reflection that spirit or mind can perceive and recall ideas, that it is able to will and put a body into motion by thought,²⁰⁷ we unite these ideas of perception, memory, and will to form our complex idea of a spiritual substance. But again, what the under-propping is that holds these separate simple ideas together we know no more than we do the substance that supports our several ideas of matter, with the result that the cohesion of thought and will in a spiritual substance is as mysterious as the union of solidity and extension in a piece of matter. "But be that as it will," Locke says, "I think, we have as many and as clear ideas belonging to spirit as we have belonging to body, the substance of each

^{204.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 2.

^{205.} *Essay*, II, xiii, 20.

^{206.} Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 313-14.

^{207.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 18.

being equally unknown to us."²⁰⁸ Since it would be as rational to question the existence of matter as to doubt the reality of spiritual substance,²⁰⁹ Locke was sceptical of neither, believing that man's knowledge both of matter and of spirit is sufficient for the performance of his duties in this world. Out of an unwillingness to assent to this compromise arose the philosophies of Berkeley and Hume. Berkeley in Ireland, by choosing to deny the existence of material substance, arrived at a philosophy of idealism that is perhaps the finest product of Celtic imagination.²¹⁰ Hume, the Scot, took both steps and questioned the reality of spiritual substance as well, whereupon he was plunged into a complete, but quite romantic scepticism.²¹¹ By comparison one is impressed with the English common sense of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* that is absent in these later, more poetic philosophies.

To summarize in a short space the important facts about substance: all our complex ideas of matter and spirit are constructed out of simple ideas:

the simple ideas we receive from sensation and reflection are the boundaries of our thoughts; beyond which the mind, whatever efforts it would make, is not able to advance one jot; nor can it make any discoveries, when it would pry into the nature and hidden causes of those ideas.²¹²

Human understanding is forbidden to look beyond the few simple ideas it has of material and spiritual substance to discover what holds these groups of ideas together:

whosoever we would proceed beyond these simple ideas we have from sensation and reflection, and dive further into the nature of things, we fall presently into darkness and obscurity, perplexedness and difficulties, and can discover nothing further but our own blindness and ignorance.²¹³

Locke's account of the origin of ideas in the human mind ends with the consideration of a fourth group of complex ideas, called relations, which are obtained by comparing one idea with another.²¹⁴ Since any idea may be considered in relation to a multitude of things,

^{208.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 28.

^{209.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 31.

^{210.} Locke, *Essay*, ed. Fraser, I, 423, n. 3.

^{211.} *Ibid.*

^{212.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 29.

^{213.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 32.

^{214.} *Essay*, II, xxv, 1.

the number of these complex ideas is unlimited.²¹⁵ One man, for example,

may at once be concerned in, and sustain all these following relations, and many more, viz. father, brother, son, grandfather, grandson, father-in-law, son-in-law, husband, friend, enemy, subject, general, judge, patron, client, professor, European, Englishman, islander, servant, master, possessor, captain, superior, inferior, bigger, less, older, younger, contemporary, like, unlike, &c., to an almost infinite number.²¹⁶

Mrs. Western, having applied herself to philosophy so that she was able to lecture on the several relations in which a human creature stands in society,²¹⁷ could probably add to this list. And yet of this multitude of relations, "all," Locke says, "terminate in, and are concerned about those simple ideas, either of sensation or reflection, which I think to be the whole materials of all our knowledge."²¹⁸ The instance of father, a natural relation, bears this out:

when the word father is mentioned: first, there is meant that particular species, or collective idea, signified by the word man; secondly, those sensible simple ideas, signified by the word generation; and, thirdly, the effects of it, and all the simple ideas signified by the word child.²¹⁹

By following this method of investigation Locke maintained that all ideas of relation may be analyzed into their constituent simple ideas. Grouped with relations are moral ideas, such as murder, which we acquire by comparing men's actions to three kinds of laws, the divine, the civil, and the social.²²⁰

In my plain sense of things, my uncle Toby would answer,—every such instance is downright Murder, let who will commit it.—There lies your mistake, my father would reply;—for, in *Foro Scientiae* there is no such thing as Murder,—'tis only Death, brother.²²¹

Mr. Shandy was correct. A certain type of death which nature shows us becomes murder only after we have related the idea to the laws of God and man. When the complex idea of murder is taken asunder

215. *Essay*, II, xxv, 7.

216. *Ibid.*

217. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. VII, cap. 3: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 365–7.

218. *Essay*, II, xxv, 9.

219. *Essay*, II, xxviii, 18.

220. *Essay*, II, xxviii, 7.

221. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, bk. I, cap. 21: ed. Cross, p. 54.

it is discovered to be a combination of several simple ideas, assembled in the following manner:

First, from *reflection* on the operations of our own minds, we have the ideas of willing, considering, purposing beforehand, malice, or wishing ill to another; and also of life, or perception, and self-motion. Secondly, from *sensation* we have the collection of those simple sensible ideas which are to be found in a man, and of some action, whereby we put an end to perception and motion in the man; all which simple ideas are comprehended in the word murder. This collection of simple ideas, being found by me to agree or disagree with the esteem of the country I have been bred in, and to be held by most men there worthy praise or blame, I call the action virtuous or vicious: if I have the will of a supreme invisible Lawgiver for my rule, then, as I supposed the action commanded or forbidden by God, I call it good or evil, sin or duty: and if I compare it to the civil law, the rule made by the legislative power of the country, I call it lawful or unlawful, a crime or no crime.²²²

By relating ideas one with another we learn also the identity of persons and things, a problem which Locke discusses in one of the most interesting chapters of the *Essay*.²²³ The question, how we know a person or an object is the same today that it was at any other previous time,²²⁴ can be answered only by comparing the person or thing to itself as existing at another time.²²⁵ A thing, or mass of matter, is the same now that it was at an earlier time only if the comparison reveals that it contains the same pieces and particles that formerly constituted it, since matter has not that ability of living beings to transfer consciousness to another form and still preserve its identity.²²⁶ The Scriblerus Club, not too seriously, ridiculed Locke's fine reasoning on this point by proving that a piece of matter enjoys just as much or as little consciousness as a living being, in evidence of which they cited this "familiar instance."

In every jack there is a meat-roasting quality, which neither resides in the fly, nor in the weight, nor in any particular wheel of the jack, but is the result of the whole composition: so in an animal the self-consciousness is not a real quality inherent in one being (any more than meat-roasting in

222. *Essay*, II, xxviii, 14.

223. *Essay*, II, xxvii.

224. *Essay*, II, xxvii, 1.

225. *Ibid.*

226. *Essay*, II, xxvii, 4.

a jack) but the result of several modes or qualities in the same subject. As the fly, the wheels, the chain, the weight, the cords, etc. make one jack, so the several parts of the body make one animal. As perception, or consciousness, is said to be inherent in this animal, so is meat-roasting said to be inherent in the jack. As sensation, reasoning, volition, memory, etc. are the several modes of thinking; so roasting of beef, roasting of mutton, roasting of pullets, geese, turkeys, etc. are the several modes of meat-roasting. And as the general quality of meat-roasting, with its several modifications as to beef, mutton, pullets, etc. does not inhere in any one part of the jack; so neither does consciousness, with its several modes of sensation, intellection, volition, etc. inhere in any one, but is the result from the mechanical composition of the whole animal.²²⁷

For a living being, Locke maintained, identity stands independent of the particles of matter that compose the body, and is determined solely by a consciousness of having performed certain actions.

Had I the same consciousness that I saw the ark and Noah's flood, as that I saw an overflowing of the Thames last winter, or as that I write now, I could no more doubt that I who write this now, that saw the Thames overflowed last winter, and that viewed the flood at the general deluge, was the same *self*,—place that self in what *substance* you please—than that I who write this am the same *myself* now whilst I write (whether I consist of all the same substance, material or immaterial, or no) that I was yesterday. For as to this point of being the same self, it matters not whether this present self be made up of the same or other substances.²²⁸

This passage from the *Essay* is quoted by Addison in a *Spectator* paper with some comments, obviously to introduce an amusing “story in some measure applicable to this piece of philosophy, which I read the other day in the ‘Persian Tales.’”²²⁹ The Scriblerus Club supplies us with numerous sly observations upon this power of living beings to transmit consciousness from one piece of substance to another, thereby preserving their identity.

The parts (say they) of an animal body are perpetually changed, and the fluids which seem to be the subject of consciousness, are in a perpetual circulation: so that the same individual particles do not remain in the

227. *Martinus Scriblerus*: Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 332–3.

228. *Essay*, II, xxvii, 16.

229. *Spectator*, No. 578.

brain; from whence it will follow, that the idea of individual consciousness must be constantly translated from one particle of matter to another, whereby the particle A, for example, must not only be conscious, but conscious that it is the same being with the particle B that went before.

We answer, this is only a fallacy of the imagination, and is to be understood in no other sense than that maxim of the English law, that the King never dies. This power of thinking, self-moving, and governing the whole machine, is communicated from every particle to its immediate successor; who, as soon as he is gone, immediately takes upon him the government, which still preserves the unity of the whole system.

They make a great noise about this individuality: how a man is conscious to himself that he is the same individual he was twenty years ago; notwithstanding the flux state of the particles of matter that compose his body. We think this is capable of a very plain answer, and may be easily illustrated by a familiar example.

Sir John Cutler had a pair of black worsted stockings, which his maid darned so often with silk, that they became at last a pair of silk stockings. Now supposing those stockings of Sir John's endued with some degree of consciousness at every particular darning, they would have been sensible, that they were the same individual pair of stockings, both before and after the darning: and this sensation would have continued in them through all the succession of darnings: and yet after the last of all, there was not perhaps one thread left of the first pair of stockings, but they were grown to be silk stockings, as was said before.

And whereas it is affirmed, that every animal is conscious of some individual self-moving, self-determining principle; it is answered, that, as in a House of Commons all things are determined by a majority, so it is in every animal system. As that which determines the House is said to be the reason of the whole assembly; it is no otherwise with thinking beings, who are determined by the greater force of several particles; which, like so many unthinking members, compose one thinking system.²³⁰

While one cannot but be refreshed with the attitude of the Scriblerus Club towards serious issues in Locke's philosophy, at the same time one is greatly impressed with the knowledge of the *Essay* that such thorough satire implies. In quite another attitude did Bishop Butler seek evidence for man's immortality in Locke's discussion of what constitutes personal identity. If the identity of an individual depends solely upon his consciousness of having performed certain acts and

230. *Martinus Scriblerus*: Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 333-4.

not at all upon the preservation of any part or parts of the body, if in other words the individual remains the same though a hand, a foot, or other part of the body be lost, may not the individual survive, Butler argues, though the entire body be destroyed?²³¹

231. *Analogy*, I, i, 15.

BOOK III

Of Words

THE third book of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* is something “new and a little out of the way,”¹ for it presents in brief space a complete philosophy of language by treating words as signs of the simple and complex ideas we have just been discussing. As competent a critic of Locke as Dugald Stewart has pronounced this study of the relation of words to thought the most valuable part of the *Essay*.²

Whatever tends to diminish the ambiguities of speech, or to fix, with more logical precision, the import of general terms;—above all, whatever tends to embody, in popular forms of expression, the ideas and feelings of the wise and good, augments the natural powers of the human understanding, and enables the succeeding race to start from a higher ground than was occupied by their fathers. The remark applies with peculiar force to the study of the Mind itself; a study, where the chief source of error is the imperfection of words; and where every improvement on this great instrument of thought may be justly regarded in the light of a discovery.³

While the true influence of Locke’s philosophy of words on the literature of the Eighteenth Century cannot be readily estimated, it is certain that, wherever the *Essay* went and affected men, it awakened an interest in the significance of words and enabled writers to be more intelligent in their use of language. Addison said:

Mr. Locke’s “Essay on Human Understanding” would be thought a very odd book for a man to make himself master of, who would get a reputation by critical writings; though at the same time it is very certain that an author who has not learned the art of distinguishing between words and things, and of ranging his thoughts, and setting them in proper lights, whatever notions he may have, will lose himself in confusion and obscurity.⁴

1. *Essay*, III, v, 16.

2. *Dissertation: Works*, ed. Hamilton, I, 67.

3. *Ibid.*, I, 77.

4. *Spectator*, No. 291.

Locke's account of the origin of language is as simple as it is rational. "God, having designed man for a sociable creature,"⁶ endowed him with the ability to name ideas, that he might both communicate and record his thoughts. Since this divine favour, however, included only the power to invent names, names themselves are entirely the creation of the human mind, with the result that they have no innate, natural connection with the ideas they represent:⁶

*words . . . came to be made use of by men as the signs of their ideas; not by any natural connexion that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea.*⁷

After long familiarity with words we come, it is true, to believe they have some fundamental relation to the ideas for which they stand, while actually no such kinship exists.⁸ This denial of the divinity of language is apparently another expression of the warfare against innateness which Locke had begun in the first book of the *Essay*. Innate ideas and an innate, natural language keep such close company that they are generally accepted or rejected together. Wordsworth, we find, asserted both⁹ as firmly as Locke denied them. Not only does language, according to the *Essay*, have an humble, human origin, but

they have not been philosophers or logicians, or such who have troubled themselves about forms and essences, that have made the general names that are in use amongst the several nations of men: but those more or less comprehensive terms have, for the most part, in all languages, received their birth and signification from ignorant and illiterate people, who sorted and denominated things by those sensible qualities they found in them.¹⁰

Language therefore, afflicted by the imperfections implied in any human creation, suffers from the further misfortune of having been formed for the most part by rude and unlearned men.

All names, Locke further asserts, instead of representing particular

5. *Essay*, III, i, 1.

6. *Essay*, III, ix, 4.

7. *Essay*, III, ii, 1.

8. *Essay*, III, ii, 8.

9. *Preface*, 1800.: "the real language of nature" (*Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 795).

10. *Essay*, III, vi, 25.

ideas, are general terms, since it would exceed the capacity of the human mind to invent and recall a distinct name for every separate idea man meets with.¹¹ The formation of all language is made possible only by our ability to abstract a few ideas from a great number of particular things. Finding the simple idea of whiteness present in a piece of paper, in snow, in the clouds, and in countless other individual objects, man abstracts that idea from its several surroundings and devises the name of whiteness to designate that idea wherever it presents itself, in paper, snow, or clouds. Whiteness therefore is a general word, as are all names for simple ideas. A consideration of the word "man" will demonstrate that names for complex ideas are likewise general. Of the millions of separate men living on the earth, we overlook the individual characteristics and peculiarities by which one is distinguished from another, to discover those few qualities, such as reason and a certain shape of body, which are common to nearly all mankind. These few universal traits are then abstracted, and the general name of man is given to that group of ideas wherever it appears. The process of abstracting ideas, so essential for the construction of language, is perhaps best explained in a satiric passage issuing from the Scriblerus Club.

Martin supposed an universal man to be like a knight of the shire, or a burgess of a corporation, that represented a great many individuals. His father asked him, if he could not frame the idea of an universal Lord Mayor? Martin told him, that, never having seen but one Lord Mayor, the idea of that Lord Mayor always returned to his mind; that he had great difficulty to abstract a Lord Mayor from his fur gown, and gold chain; nay, that the horse he saw the Lord Mayor ride upon, not a little disturbed his imagination. On the other hand Crambe, to shew himself of a more penetrating genius, swore that he could frame a conception of a Lord Mayor, not only without his horse, gown, and gold chain, but even without stature, feature, colour, hands, head, feet, or any body; which he supposed was the abstract of a Lord Mayor.¹²

For the unsophisticated Martin it was very difficult to overlook the individual attributes, the fur gown and the gold chain, of the one Lord Mayor he had seen, and form an idea of a general Lord Mayor;

11. *Essay*, III, iii, 2.

12. *Martinus Scriblerus*: Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 309.

on the other hand we must not imitate Crambe, who had apparently taken abstraction to mean annihilation.

The names of simple ideas, though they are general terms, seldom cause misunderstanding for they represent single simple ideas, well known to each man by the experience of sensation or reflection. In fact, only by experience can the signification of such names be discovered. No definition by words can, for example, furnish an explanation of the idea of whiteness or any other colour which has not actually been sensed through sight. Therefore a man blind from his birth, with all the assistance of definition and the other four senses, is incapable of understanding the meaning of words designating colours.

For, to hope to produce an idea of light or colour by a sound, however formed, is to expect that sounds should be visible, or colours audible; and to make the ears do the office of all the other senses. Which is all one as to say, that we might taste, smell, and see by the ears: a sort of philosophy worthy only of Sancho Pança, who had the faculty to see Dulcinea by hearsay.¹³

In connection with his assertion that experience is essential for comprehending the names of simple ideas, Locke relates:

A studious blind man, who had mightily beat his head about visible objects, and made use of the explication of his books and friends, to understand those names of light and colours which often came in his way, bragged one day, That he now understood what *scarlet* signified. Upon which, his friend demanding what *scarlet* was? The blind man answered, It was like the sound of a trumpet. Just such an understanding of the name of any other simple idea will he have, who hopes to get it only from a definition, or other words made use of to explain it.¹⁴

13. *Essay*, III, iv, 11.

14. *Ibid.* Erika von Erhardt-Siebold in an article entitled "Harmony of the Senses in English, German, and French Romanticism," in *PMLA XLVII* (1932), pp. 577-92, cites this passage with the note (p. 577, n. 2): "The identity of the blind man was later revealed by Mme de Staël; the famous name of the English mathematician Nicholas Saunderson, blind from his birth, gave substance to his fantastic experience." Mme de Staël does record that the "aveugle-né Sanderson" said "qu'il se représentait la couleur écarlate comme le son de la trompette" (*De L'Allemagne*, Part III, cap. 10: 4th ed., 4 vols., Paris, 1818, IV, 54). But Saunderson, not born until 1682 (DNB), could hardly be the "studious blind man" of whom Locke had written in the *Essay* before 1690. Saunderson is referred to in Boswell's *Life*: "We talked of the notion

Locke's striking illustration to demonstrate what an imperfect knowledge one has of simple ideas without the proper experiences of sensation or reflection, may be accused of insubordination. The story of the blind man who imagined scarlet and the sound of a trumpet to be the same provided an interesting anecdote for the *Tatler*,¹⁵ many of whose readers must have been as fascinated by this passage in the *Essay* as Fielding, who twice in *Tom Jones* mentions Locke's blind man. In the first chapter of the fourth book of this novel we read:

Thus the hero is always introduced with a flourish of drums and trumpets, in order to rouse a martial spirit in the audience, and to accommodate their ears to bombast and fustian, which Mr. Locke's blind man would not have grossly erred in likening to the sound of a trumpet.¹⁶

In another introductory chapter Fielding uses the incident of the blind man to prove to every cold and unromantic reader of *Tom Jones* that love, as though it were a simple, undefinable idea, can be understood only through experience.

To treat of the effects of love to you must be as absurd as to discourse on colours to a man born blind; since possibly your idea of love may be as absurd as that which we are told such blind man once entertained of the colour scarlet; that colour seemed to him to be very much like the sound of a trumpet: and love probably may, in your opinion, very greatly resemble a dish of soup, or a sirloin of roast-beef.¹⁷

The fact that a blind man lacked knowledge of the simple, undefinable ideas of colour, was a considerable portion of the wisdom of the age. Among the members of Swift's Grand Academy of Lagado is "a man born blind, who had several apprentices in his own condition: their employment was to mix colours for painters, which their

that blind persons can distinguish colours by the touch. Johnson said, that Professor Sanderson mentions his having attempted to do it, but that he found he was aiming at an impossibility; that to be sure a difference in the surface makes the difference of colours; but that difference is so fine, that it is not sensible to the touch" (*Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, II, 190). Saunderson figures prominently in Diderot's *Letter on the Blind for the Use of Those who See*, published in 1749. (See John Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopédistes*, I, 88-94.) The limitations in knowledge of this learned and unfortunate individual seem frequently to have been used in the Eighteenth Century to illustrate the importance of the senses for obtaining ideas.

15. *Tatler*, No. 227.

16. *Tom Jones*, bk. IV, cap. 1: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 155.

17. *Ibid.*, bk. VI, cap. 1: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 292-3.

master taught them to distinguish by feeling and smelling."¹⁸ The warning included in a piece of Swift's philosophical writing, "to tell my critics and witlings, that they are no more judges of this, than a man that is born blind can have any true idea of colours"¹⁹ was necessary if there was truth in Isaac Watts's rueful observation, "This is the Way of the World: Blind Men will talk of the Beauty of Colours, and of the Harmony or Disproportion of Figures in Painting; the Deaf will prate of Discords in Musick." etc., etc.²⁰ Johnson reveals his familiarity with this popular simile in the following criticism:

Mr. Clark compares the obstinacy of those who disbelieve the genuineness of Ossian to a blind man, who should dispute the reality of colours, and deny that the British troops are cloathed in red. The blind man's doubt would be rational, if he did not know by experience that others have a power which he himself wants.²¹

It is certain that the Eighteenth Century believed a man born blind had no conception of colours: it is only probable, however, that this belief was always supported with a knowledge of that part of Locke's *Essay* which demonstrates that all simple ideas are undefinable.

While definition, which is the enumeration of the several ideas represented by a word, serves in the case of names of complex ideas, names of simple ideas forbid such description because they obviously cannot be resolved into separate parts. These undefinable names of simple ideas, "too plain to admit a definition,"²² Johnson postulated as the foundation of the definitions of the names of complex ideas in his *Dictionary*, so that it might be said that a complete list of the words in Johnson's or any other dictionary which are incapable of being understood otherwise than by actual experience would contain all the simple ideas which Locke has made the foundation of knowledge. However,

though the names of simple ideas have not the help of definition to determine their signification, yet that hinders not but that they are gen-

18. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, 187.

19. *Critical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, 293.

20. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 5: ed. 1741, pp. 85-6.

21. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, IV, 252.

22. Johnson, Preface to the *Dictionary: Works*, V, 34.

erally less doubtful and uncertain than those of mixed modes [notions] and substances; because they, standing only for one simple perception, men for the most part easily and perfectly agree in their signification; and there is little room for mistake and wrangling about their meaning. He that knows once that whiteness is the name of that colour he has observed in snow or milk, will not be apt to misapply that word, as long as he retains that idea; which when he has quite lost, he is not apt to mistake the meaning of it, but perceives he understands it not. There is neither a multiplicity of simple ideas to be put together, which makes the doubtfulness in the names of mixed modes; nor a supposed, but an unknown, real essence, with properties depending thereon, the precise number whereof is also unknown, which makes the difficulty in the names of substances.²³

If the names of simple ideas are rarely confusing, words standing for complex ideas, especially ideas suggesting substance, permit every type of misunderstanding for the reason that they contain several simple ideas. Who shall determine just how many and what simple ideas the name of a complex idea shall represent? Man, as a species, is the best and most interesting example for illustrating the vagueness and imperfection of a name of a complex idea. That no two persons, perhaps, would agree upon the essential ideas to be signified by the name man is partly explained by the fact that nature has not created a distinct species of man, marked by certain definite ideas. Instead of setting men apart into a separate group by themselves, nature has fused mankind indivisibly and indistinguishably into the great chain of life that ascends from lowest living forms upward through men and angels to a final God.²⁴ Since man both merges inseparably into a higher world of spiritual beings and blends equally into the condition of lower animals, any effort to abstract an order of man from this ascending and descending scale of life is an arbitrary departure from natural truth.²⁵ Uncertainty and error are therefore at once inherent in the name of the complex idea of man, since nature has not designed human beings as a definite class by themselves with

23. *Essay*, III, iv, 15.

24. *Essay*, III, vi, 12.

25. Cf. Watts, *Philosophical Essays*, Essay XI, sec. 1: "Ancient scholastick Writers indeed were almost universally agreed, that all *natural Beings* are . . . exactly distributed into distinct *Species*, and that each hath its own indivisible and unchangeable *Essence*: But in our Age we are taught to philosophize with more Caution on this Subject; and that great Genius Mr. *Locke* has done much toward teaching us."

distinct ideas belonging to each member. But, having established a species of man by our own invention, we find there is no one to decide what collection of simple ideas shall be included under this name man. If it may be supposed, however, every one will agree that the name man must imply a certain spiritual substance, we have then to recall that our knowledge of spiritual substance does not extend beyond a few simple ideas of reflection. The further requirement that the name man must stand for a material substance increases our perplexity, since we are wholly ignorant of material substance except for a few simple ideas of sensation. The name man, which may be called a knot to tie up the bundle of ideas belonging to such a being, is therefore obscure, first, since the number of ideas to be included in this bundle is indeterminable, and secondly, because many of the ideas composing this bundle imply those obscure substances of which we possess no real knowledge.

For the natural imperfection of the names for complex ideas, illustrated by the word man, Locke felt no temptation to scoff at human incapacity. Men must have language for communication, and, since there is no way to ascertain what precise collection of ideas shall be represented by every specific name, they are obliged to attach different ideas to the same word. In consideration of this fact Locke urged that we be charitable in all our criticism, especially "in our interpretations or misunderstandings of those ancient writings."²⁶ So insidious is the imperfection of language, it is no wonder

that the will of God, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance, when even his Son, whilst clothed in flesh, was subject to all the frailties and inconveniences of human nature, sin excepted.²⁷

Simply because of the unavoidable faultiness of the language in the Bible itself, Locke argued for a natural religion.

Since then the precepts of Natural Religion are plain, and very intelligible to all mankind, and seldom come to be controverted; and other revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages, are liable to the common and natural obscurities and difficulties incident to words; methinks it would become us to be more careful and diligent in observing

26. *Essay*, III, ix, 22.

27. *Essay*, III, ix, 23.

the former, and less magisterial, positive, and imperious, in imposing our own sense and interpretations of the latter.²⁸

It would be interesting to speculate how far such philological criticism was responsible for the English deists' rejection of the Bible and its revelations, for Paine, we know, used this argument from language in the *Age of Reason* in his attack upon the Scriptures.

The continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of an universal language which renders translation necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of wilful alteration, are of themselves evidences that human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the Word of God.—The Word of God exists in something else.²⁹

God speaks to each man unambiguously, Paine would have us suppose, through each man's individual reason.

The realization that men unavoidably affix different ideas to the same word brought unusual responses from numerous sources. Prior caustically remarked, "If no Mans Ideas be perfectly the same, Locks Human Understanding may be fit only for the Meditation of Lock himself,"³⁰ while Addison saw in the confusion of language the consoling fact that readers, associating their own ideas with words, would all receive personal and unique pleasures from the same piece of writing.³¹ The bewilderments resulting from language provided Pope and Bolingbroke, ever prepared to belittle man, further reason for ridiculing human perplexity. The philosopher wrote to the poet:

I persuade myself that you have been more than once ready to laugh or cry, in the midst of several rational creatures, who talked of things quite different, called them by the same names, and imagined that they talked of the same things. The choirs of birds who whistle and sing, or scream at one another, or the herds of beasts who bleat and lowe, or chatter and roar at one another, have just as much meaning, and communicate it just as well. At least I presume so, for I can affirm of no species but my own.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Age of Reason*, Part I, cap. 7: *Writings*, ed. Conway, IV, 38.

30. "Dialogue between Mr John Lock and Seigneur de Montaigne": *Dialogues of the Dead and Other Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. Waller, p. 246.

31. *Spectator*, No. 416.

All of them seem to have ideas, and these seem often to be better determined in the birds and beasts, than in men.³²

The poet was probably more ready to laugh than weep.

Wits, just like fools, at war about a name,
Have full as oft no meaning, or the same.³³

Locke would have reminded both Bolingbroke and Pope that some misunderstanding is inevitable and wholly excusable.

Though patient with the natural imperfections of language, Locke was intolerant of any wilful "abuse of words" that would increase the necessary uncertainties of communication. The warning he issued against this practice was repeated in the *Spectator*.

MR. LOCKE, in his "Treatise of Human Understanding," has spent two chapters upon the abuse of words. The first and most palpable abuse of words, he says, is when they are used without clear and distinct ideas: the second, when we are so inconstant and unsteady in the application of them that we sometimes use them to signify one idea, sometimes another.³⁴

The very suggestion of the word "abuse" seems to have made a profitable impression on many writers, for we find Pope recommending to the authors of Bathos "the study of the abuse of speech,"³⁵ while Square exclaimed, when Tom Jones broke his arm, "it was a mere abuse of words to call those things evils, in which there was no moral unfitness."³⁶ Moreover men did not neglect Locke's charge that the careless or intentional use of words without any clear and distinct ideas whatsoever attached to them was the principal abuse of language. Watts, in full agreement with this accusation, said, "Were I Master of as many Languages as were spoken at *Babel*, I should make but a poor pretence to true Learning or Knowledge, if I had not clear and distinct *Ideas*, and useful Notions in my Head under the *Words* which my Tongue could pronounce."³⁷ The pages of *Tom*

32. Bolingbroke, *Works*, III, 422.

33. Pope, *Essay on Man*, II, 85-6.

34. *Spectator*, No. 373.

35. *Martinus Scriblerus: Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, (374).

36. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. V, cap. 2: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 226. It should not be concealed that Fielding, in this instance, is deriving Locke through Shaftesbury.

37. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 7: ed. 1741, p. 117.

Jones would, however, have been less amusing if such scrupulosity had prevented Mrs. Waters from exclaiming, when her bedroom was invaded,

murder! robbery, and more frequently rape! which last, some, perhaps, may wonder she should mention, who do not consider that these words of exclamation are used by ladies in a fright, as fa, la, la, ra, da, &c. are in music, only as the vehicles of sound, and without any fixed ideas.³⁸

Corporal Trim's fondness for language *per se* betrayed him so regularly into this abuse of speech, that Mr. Shandy might safely say on any occasion, "—I will enter into obligations this moment . . . to lay out all my aunt Dinah's legacy in charitable uses . . . , if the corporal has any one determinate idea annexed to any one word he has repeated."³⁹ While both Sterne and Fielding played with this phase of the abuse of language, the latter gave it serious attention in the fourth number of the *Covent-Garden Journal*, which begins:

"ONE may observe," says Mr. Locke, "in all Languages, certain Words, that, if they be examined, will be found, in their first Original, and their appropriated Use, not to stand for any clear and distinct Ideas." Mr. Locke gives us the Instances "of Wisdom, Glory, Grace. Words which are frequent enough (says he) in every Man's Mouth; but if a great many of those who use them, should be asked what they mean by them, they would be at a Stand, and not know what to answer: A plain Proof, that tho' they have learned those Sounds, and have them ready at their Tongue's End; yet there are no determin'd Ideas laid up in their Minds, which are to be expressed to others by them."

In passing let it be remarked that to the long list of words in the human vocabulary to which one can attach no definite idea Tom Paine would add in democratic fashion the meaningless titles of duke and count.⁴⁰ But to continue with Fielding's criticism of Locke,

Besides the several Causes by him assigned of the Abuse of Words, there is one, which, tho' the great Philosopher hath omitted it, seems to have contributed not a little to the Introduction of this enormous Evil. This is That Privilege which Divines and moral Writers have assumed to them-

38. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. X, cap. 2: *Works*, ed. Browne, VII, 7.

39. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, bk. V, cap. 32: ed. Cross, p. 317.

40. *Rights of Man*, Part I: *Writings*, ed. Conway, II, 320.

selves of doing Violence to certain Words, in Favour of their own Hypotheses, and of using them in a Sense often directly contrary to that which Custom (the absolute Lord and Master, according to Horace, of all the Modes of Speech) hath allotted them.

Although Locke may have omitted special reference to the failings of divines and moralists, they would perhaps be welcomed to the class of those "disputing and wrangling philosophers,"⁴¹ who have "added much to the natural imperfection of languages"⁴² by their affected obscurity in the use of words.

This is unavoidably to be so, where men's parts and learning are estimated by their skill in disputing. And if reputation and reward shall attend these conquests, which depend mostly on the fineness and niceties of words, it is no wonder if the wit of man so employed, should perplex, involve, and subtilize the signification of sounds, so as never to want something to say in opposing or defending any question; the victory being adjudged not to him who had truth on his side, but the last word in the dispute.⁴³

Among the seven abuses of speech which Locke lists, probably recalling in his numeration the deadly sins, is rhetoric.

It is evident how much men love to deceive and be deceived, since rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation: and I doubt not but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality, in me to have said thus much against it. Eloquence, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And it is in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.⁴⁴

But those who followed Locke in the condemnation of rhetoric's abuse of speech were not so numerous as might be wished, which is perhaps not surprising when one remembers that even Bacon had been so misguided in his estimate of eloquence that he compared it to wisdom itself.⁴⁵ Sterne revealed some slight disaffection for the art as mastered by Mr. Shandy, of whom he said, "Persuasion hung upon

41. *Essay*, III, x, 8.

42. *Essay*, III, x, 6.

43. *Essay*, III, x, 7.

44. *Essay*, III, x, 34.

45. *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning: Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, pp. 534-5.

his lips, and the elements of Logic and Rhetoric were so blended up in him,—and, withal, he had so shrewd a guess at the weaknesses and passions of his respondent,—that Nature might have stood up and said,—‘This man is eloquent.’”⁴⁶ Allusions deriding oratory, which should have flourished in the sunshine of Locke’s influence, are however so few that it was an unusual surprise to discover in Smollett’s writings the following completely Lockian passage.

Our orator was well acquainted with all the legerdemain of his own language, as well as with the nature of the beast he had to rule. He knew when to distract its weak brain with a tumult of incongruous and contradictory ideas: he knew when to overwhelm its feeble faculty of thinking, by pouring in a torrent of words without any ideas annexed. These throng in like city-milliners to a Mile-end assembly, while it happens to be under the direction of a conductor without strength and authority. Those that have ideas annexed may be compared to the females provided with partners, which, though they may croud the place, do not absolutely destroy all regulation and decorum. But those that are uncoupled, press in promiscuously with such impetuosity and in such numbers, that the puny master of the ceremonies is unable to withstand the irruption; far less, to distinguish their quality, or accommodate them with partners: thus they fall into the dance without order, and immediately anarchy ensues.⁴⁷

Paine thought the great apologist for monarchy just such an orator.

Mr. Burke has two or three times, in his parliamentary speeches, and in his publications, made use of a jingle of words that convey no ideas. Speaking of government, he says, “It is better to have monarchy for its basis, and republicanism for its corrective, than republicanism for its basis, and monarchy for its corrective.”⁴⁸

To offset the natural imperfection of words and correct the wilful abuse of speech, Locke offered only a few suggestions, for he did not nourish the vain hope of a general reformation of the language of England or of the world.⁴⁹

46. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. I, cap. 19: ed. Cross, p. 40.

47. *Adventures of an Atom: Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves Together with The History & Adventures of an Atom*, Oxford, 1926, pp. 381–2.

48. *Rights of Man*, Part II, cap. 3: *Writings*, ed. Conway, II, 425.

49. *Essay*, III, xi, 2.

But though the market and exchange must be left to their own ways of talking, and gossipings not be robbed of their ancient privilege: though the schools, and men of argument would perhaps take it amiss to have anything offered, to abate the length or lessen the number of their disputes; yet methinks those who pretend seriously to search after or maintain truth, should think themselves obliged to study how they might deliver themselves without obscurity, doubtfulness, or equivocation, to which men's words are naturally liable, if care be not taken.⁵⁰

The main remedy prescribed is an extraordinary type of definition. For the names of simple ideas synonyms may be used, but the best method of explaining to anyone the meaning of a word signifying a simple idea is "*by presenting to his senses that subject which may produce it in his mind*, and make him actually have the idea that word stands for."⁵¹ Names for immaterial complex ideas, especially moral ideas, may be defined by listing the simple ideas they include,⁵² which Johnson did in his *Dictionary* with an acuteness of intellect and a precision of language which were sufficient in themselves to convince Boswell of his genius.⁵³ But speaking now of names for complex ideas that represent substances, there should be, Locke believed, a dictionary wherein "words standing for things which are known and distinguished by their outward shapes should be expressed by little draughts and prints made of them."⁵⁴ Nothing is more indicative of the high premium Locke's sensational philosophy placed upon the material world than this desire for a dictionary with "little draughts and prints."

Locke's insistence upon definition, it is to be feared, enlisted the genial rather than serious sympathy of literature. The Scriblerus Club, in its pleasant, bantering manner, records that Crambe

found fault with the advertisements, that they were not strict logical definitions: in an advertisement of a dog stolen or strayed, he said it ought to begin thus, An irrational animal of the *genus caninum*, &c.⁵⁵

In a very light vein Swift wrote to Thomas Sheridan, "I begin with

50. *Essay*, III, xi, 3.

51. *Essay*, III, xi, 14.

52. *Essay*, III, xi, 15.

53. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 293.

54. *Essay*, III, xi, 25.

55. *Martinus Scriblerus*: Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 310.

lady; and because the judicious Mr. Locke says it is necessary to settle terms, before we write upon any subject, I describe a certain female of your acquaintance, whose name shall be Dorothy."⁵⁶ Definition inspired this little scene in *Tom Jones*: Thwackum asked, "Can any honour exist independent of religion? . . . To this Square answered, that it was impossible to discourse philosophically concerning words, till their meaning was first established."⁵⁷ Sterne, who is the best source for illustrations of Locke, introduced his account of Uncle Toby's love affair with the statement:

All I contend for is, that I am not obliged to set out with a definition of what love is; and so long as I can go on with my story intelligibly, with the help of the word itself, without any other idea to it, than what I have in common with the rest of the world, why should I differ from it a moment before the time?—When I can get on no further,—and find myself entangled on all sides of this mystic labyrinth,—my Opinion will then come in, in course,—and lead me out.⁵⁸

On another occasion, however, Sterne did not shy at definition, choosing instead to be philologically exact.

Now before I venture to make use of the word Nose a second time—to avoid all confusion in what will be said upon it, in this interesting part of my story, it may not be amiss to explain my own meaning, and define, with all possible exactness and precision, what I would willingly be understood to mean by the term: being of opinion, that 'tis owing to the negligence and perverseness of writers in despising this precaution, and to nothing else—that all the polemical writings in divinity are not as clear and demonstrative as those upon a Will o' the Wisp, or any other sound part of philosophy, and natural pursuit; in order to which, what have you to do, before you set out, unless you intend to go puzzling on to the day of judgment—but to give the world a good definition, and stand to it, of the main word you have most occasion for—changing it, Sir, as you would a guinea, into small coin?—which done—let the father of confusion puzzle you, if he can; or put a different idea either into your head, or your reader's head, if he knows how.⁵⁹

56. *Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Ball, V, 241.

57. Fielding, *Tom Jones*, bk. III, cap. 3: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 124.

58. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. VI, cap. 37: ed. Cross, p. 378.

59. *Ibid.*, bk. III, cap. 31: ed. Cross, pp. 173–4.

The tragic outcome of Sterne's determination to define at this particular juncture in the story, to turn a guinea into small coin or list the simple ideas represented by the name of a complex idea, leads one to question, if not the necessity, at least the propriety of following Locke's philosophy of words to the very letter.

BOOK IV

Of Knowledge and Probability

THE first three books of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, which explain the origin of ideas and their relation to words, are but a preparation for the conclusions concerning the extent of human knowledge to be found in the fourth and final book. All knowledge, Locke says, is "but the perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas."¹ This statement, though simple, is so inclusive that we shall accept it as true only after long consideration. A knowledge of the agreement or disagreement of ideas may be had intuitively, or directly, by placing two ideas together simply by themselves and observing at once that they are the same or different.

Thus the mind perceives that *white* is not *black*, that a *circle* is not a *triangle*, that *three* are more than *two* and equal to *one and two*. Such kinds of truths the mind perceives at the first sight of the ideas together, by bare intuition; without the intervention of any other idea: and this kind of knowledge is the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of. This part of knowledge is irresistible, and, like bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived, as soon as ever the mind turns its view that way; and leaves no room for hesitation, doubt, or examination, but the mind is presently filled with the clear light of it.²

In most cases, however, we are not blessed with this intuitive knowledge which tells us directly and immediately that two ideas agree or disagree, and to understand the relation of these ideas we are obliged to resort to demonstration. Demonstrative knowledge is attained by the process of reason, which is nothing more than placing an extra idea, or series of ideas, between the two ideas whose relation we would determine.³ Sterne's remarks, often more clear than philosophy in its purer form, are very helpful in explaining this demonstrative knowledge provided by reason. Reason, or in his words,

1. *Essay*, IV, i, 2.

3. *Essay*, IV, ii, 2.

2. *Essay*, IV, ii, 1.

—the great and principal act of ratiocination in man, as logicians tell us, is the finding out the agreement or disagreement of two ideas one with another, by the intervention of a third (called the *medius terminus*); just as a man, as Locke well observes, by a yard, finds two men's ninepin-alleys to be of the same length, which could not be brought together, to measure their equality, by juxtaposition.⁴

Through Sterne Locke's philosophy appears much gayer than it is, for in this instance the *Essay's* sober example had been: "A man, by a yard, finds two houses to be of the same length, which could not be brought together to measure their equality by juxtaposition."⁵ Since *Tristram Shandy* was written with careful attention to Locke's theory of the association of ideas, Sterne changed "house" to "ninepin-alley" in order to set Uncle Toby thinking of the bowling-green.

Having this concise definition of knowledge as the intuitive or demonstrative perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, it is necessary to consider some of the factors which prevent a clear understanding of the true relation of ideas. Love of pleasure and mental laziness, ancient foes of knowledge, were not overlooked in the *Essay*.

Their hot pursuit of pleasure, or constant drudgery in business, engages some men's thoughts elsewhere: laziness and oscitancy in general, or a particular aversion for books, study, and meditation, keep others from any serious thoughts at all; and some out of fear that an impartial inquiry would not favour those opinions which best suit their prejudices, lives, and designs, content themselves, without examination, to take upon trust what they find convenient and in fashion.⁶

Submission to authority, the acceptance of opinions without examination and proofs were as much the evils of Locke's age as of any other.⁷ Many men will hold to their favourite hypotheses long after they have been discovered false.

Would it not be an insufferable thing for a learned professor, and that which his scarlet would blush at, to have his authority of forty years standing, wrought out of hard rock, Greek and Latin, with no small expense of time and candle, and confirmed by general tradition and a rev-

4. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. III, cap. 40: ed. Cross, pp. 187-8.

5. *Essay*, IV, xvii, 18.

6. *Essay*, IV, xx, 6.

7. *Essay*, IV, xx, 2.

erend beard, in an instant overturned by an upstart novelist? Can any one expect that he should be made to confess, that what he taught his scholars thirty years ago was all error and mistake; and that he sold them hard words and ignorance at a very dear rate.⁸

One cannot blame the professor for clinging to his outworn theories and refusing to see the actual agreement of ideas. In other instances knowledge is defeated by ruling passions which blind men to the reality of things.

Probabilities which cross men's appetites and prevailing passions run the same fate. Let ever so much probability hang on one side of a covetous man's reasoning, and money on the other; it is easy to foresee which will outweigh. Earthly minds, like mud walls, resist the strongest batteries: and though, perhaps, sometimes the force of a clear argument may make some impression, yet they nevertheless stand firm, and keep out the enemy, truth, that would captivate or disturb them. Tell a man passionately in love, that he is jilted; bring a score of witnesses of the falsehood of his mistress, it is ten to one but three kind words of hers shall invalidate all their testimonies.⁹

No man scorned in love is eager to see the actual disagreement and repugnancy of ideas. These several wilful refusals to observe the true relationship of ideas might be called the abuse of knowledge as a parallel to the abuse of words.

Yet such occasional impediments to truth are insignificant when compared with the chief obstacle preventing the perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas, which is the irreparable weakness and incapacity of the human mind. The causes of our obscure knowledge of ideas, Locke said,

seem to be either dull organs; or very slight and transient impressions made by the objects; or else a weakness in the memory, not able to retain them as received. For to return again to visible objects, to help us to apprehend this matter. If the organs, or faculties of perception, like wax over-hardened with cold, will not receive the impression of the seal, from the usual impulse wont to imprint it; or, like wax of a temper too soft, will not hold it well, when well imprinted; or else supposing the wax of a temper fit, but the seal not applied with a sufficient force to make a clear impression: in any of these cases, the print left by the seal will be obscure.¹⁰

8. *Essay*, IV, xx, 11.

9. *Essay*, IV, xx, 12.

10. *Essay*, II, xxix, 3.

If Locke's condensed account of the causes of obscurity is itself not clear, we may be enlightened by Sterne's dramatization of this illustration.

Now if you will venture to go along with me, and look down into the bottom of this matter, it will be found that the cause of obscurity and confusion, in the mind of a man, is threefold.

Dull organs, dear Sir, in the first place. Secondly, slight and transient impressions made by the objects, when the said organs are not dull. And thirdly, a memory like unto a sieve, not able to retain what it has received.—Call down Dolly your chamber-maid, and I will give you my cap and bell along with it, if I make not this matter so plain that Dolly herself should understand it as well as Malebranch.—When Dolly has indited her epistle to Robin, and has thrust her arm into the bottom of her pocket hanging by her right side;—take that opportunity to recollect that the organs and faculties of perception can, by nothing in this world be so aptly typified and explained as by that one thing which Dolly's hand is in search of.—Your organs are not so dull that I should inform you—'tis an inch, Sir, of red seal-wax.

When this is melted and dropped upon the letter, if Dolly fumbles too long for her thimble, till the wax is over hardened, it will not receive the mark of her thimble from the usual impulse which was wont to imprint it. Very well. If Dolly's wax, for want of better, is bees-wax, or of a temper too soft,—tho' it may receive,—it will not hold the impression, how hard soever Dolly thrusts against it; and last of all, supposing the wax good, and eke the thimble, but applied thereto in careless haste, as her Mistress rings the bell;—in any one of these three cases the print left by the thimble will be as unlike the prototype as a brass-jack.¹¹

Dull organs and a memory like unto a sieve only partially describe the imperfections of the mind of man, who, according to Locke, "in all probability is one of the lowest of all intellectual beings."¹² Bolingbroke, omitting the probability, frankly stated that all error begins "in the high opinion we are apt to entertain of the human mind, tho it holds, in truth, a very low rank in the intellectual system."¹³

As evidence of the inferiority of man's mental endowments we may recall Locke's earlier statements that the mind cannot always be thinking, and that the difference between the understanding of the

11. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. II, cap. 2: ed. Cross, p. 66.

12. *Essay*, IV, iii, 23.

13. *Works*, III, 328.

human and the brute is not so considerable as some have supposed. With these assertions may be grouped the facts that "our finite understandings" are "able to think clearly and distinctly but on one thing at once,"¹⁴ and further that it is impossible for a man to keep "one self-same single idea a long time alone in his mind,"¹⁵ an observation which will appear particularly cynical when applied to grief and all our nobler ideas. Man's powers of perception, furthermore, are so peculiarly mean and average that he is unable to see anything moving as rapidly as a cannon-ball,¹⁶ or as slowly as the hands of the ordinary clock.¹⁷

Our limitations of perception are not greater than those of the memory, which, Bolingbroke asserted, "is proportioned to our imperfect nature, and therefore weak, slow, and uncertain in its operations."¹⁸ The thought of the failings of the memory had stirred in Locke an emotion not frequently to be met with in the *Essay*.

The memory of some men, it is true, is very tenacious, even to a miracle. But yet there seems to be a constant decay of all our ideas, even of those which are struck deepest, and in minds the most retentive; so that if they be not sometimes renewed, by repeated exercise of the senses, or reflection on those kinds of objects which at first occasioned them, the print wears out, and at last there remains nothing to be seen. Thus the ideas, as well as children, of our youth, often die before us: and our minds represent to us those tombs to which we are approaching; where, though the brass and marble remain, yet the inscriptions are effaced by time, and the imagery moulders away.¹⁹

Locke thinks then of Pascal, "that prodigy of parts," who, "till the decay of his health had impaired his memory, . . . forgot nothing of what he had done, read, or thought, in any part of his rational age."²⁰ And yet Pascal, being human, was limited in this faculty, and could not rival angels, some of whom may be "endowed with capacities able to retain together, and constantly set before them, as in one picture, all their past knowledge at once."²¹ On another occasion Locke has described the decay of the memory in realistic, Swiftean words.

14. *Essay*, IV, i, 8.

15. *Essay*, II, xiv, 13.

16. *Essay*, II, xiv, 10.

17. *Essay*, II, xiv, 11.

18. *Works*, III, 368.

19. *Essay*, II, x, 5.

20. *Essay*, II, x, 9.

21. *Ibid.*

Take one in whom decrepit old age has blotted out the memory of his past knowledge, and clearly wiped out the ideas his mind was formerly stored with, and has, by destroying his sight, hearing, and smell quite, and his taste to a great degree, stopped up almost all the passages for new ones to enter; or if there be some of the inlets yet half open, the impressions made are scarcely perceived, or not at all retained. How far such an one (notwithstanding all that is boasted of innate principles) is in his knowledge and intellectual faculties above the condition of a cockle or an oyster, I leave to be considered. And if a man had passed sixty years in such a state, as it is possible he might, as well as three days, I wonder what difference there would be, in any intellectual perfections, between him and the lowest degree of animals.²²

Swift may well have had this distressing passage in mind when he composed his repulsive description of the immortal *struldbrugs*.

At ninety they lose their teeth and hair, they have at that age no distinction of taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite. The diseases they were subject to still continue without increasing or diminishing. In talking they forget the common appellation of things, and the names of persons, even of those who are their nearest friends and relations. For the same reason, they never can amuse themselves with reading, because their memory will not serve to carry them from the beginning of a sentence to the end; and by this defect they are deprived of the only entertainment whereof they might otherwise be capable.²³

Swift's account bears Locke out, that those who have "passed sixty years" almost without memory and perception as have the undying *struldbrugs*, are little different from "the lowest degree of animals."

When such defects are apparent in the mind, it is but a short way to the suggestion that this imperfect thinking power in man is not spiritual but material. The possibility that matter may think, a supposition Bacon did not consider,²⁴ is stated by Locke in a single paragraph,²⁵ which aroused more criticism than any other section of the

22. *Essay*, II, ix, 14.

23. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, 222.

24. *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning: Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 480.

25. *Essay*, IV, iii, 6.

Essay.²⁶ Founding his argument securely upon God's unlimited power, he maintained it is

not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter *a faculty of thinking*, than that he should superadd to it *another substance with a faculty of thinking*; since we know not wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that power, which cannot be in any created being, but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the Creator.²⁷

Though we possess no certain knowledge concerning the composition of the mind, or soul, in any case,

All the great ends of morality and religion are well enough secured, without philosophical proofs of the soul's immortality; since it is evident, that he who made us at the beginning to subsist here, sensible intelligent beings, and for several years continued us in such a state, can and will restore us to the like state of sensibility in another world, and make us capable there to receive the retribution he has designed to men, according to their doings in this life.²⁸

The problem of the nature of the soul engaged and disturbed Eighteenth-Century thought more seriously than is suggested by Sterne's light treatment of the subject.

God's power is infinite, cried the Nosarians, he can do any thing.

He can do nothing, replied the Antinosarians, which implies contradictions.

He can make matter think, said the Nosarians.

As certainly as you can make a velvet cap out of a sow's ear, replied the Antinosarians.²⁹

In actual life the chief of the Nosarians was perhaps Lord Bolingbroke, who repeated Locke's statement that matter may think,³⁰ and asserted in his own words that "the faculty of thinking, in all the modes of thought, may have been superadded by omnipotence to

26. *Essay*, ed. Fraser, II, 198, n. 3. See Voltaire, *Letters concerning the English Nation*, pp. 100–04. Letter 13.

27. *Essay*, IV, iii, 6.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. IV, "Slawkenbergius's Tale": ed. Cross, p. 209.

30. *Works*, III, 513.

certain systems of matter."³¹ To keep in line with Locke he further observed that the immortality of the soul is not essential for immortality.³² The Antinosarians, as Sterne would have us call those who would not countenance the notion that matter may think, included the group we should expect, beginning with Addison, who, in a discourse on the soul, argued for its immortality,

First, from the nature of the soul itself, and particularly its immateriality; which, though not absolutely necessary to the eternity of its duration, has, I think, been evinced to almost a demonstration.³³

As Isaac Watts quite naturally rejected this "*dangerous*" opinion that matter and mind are one,³⁴ so did Edward Young, the gloomy optimist of the *Night Thoughts*, contend for the spiritual quality of the soul.

Her ceaseless flight, tho' devious, speaks her nature
Of subtler essence than the trodden clod.³⁵

The most elaborate attack upon this heretical doctrine was launched in the *Anti-Lucretius* of Cardinal de Polignac. The couplet in Book Three of this philosophical epic,

How widely different Matter is from Mind,
Explain'd at large hereafter shalt thou find,³⁶

points to the entire fifth book, of which the following lines are a representative summary:

From all the different forms it may receive,
Behold the whole that Matter can atchieve.
I see it's bulk and figure often chang'd,
I see it's parts in various order rang'd;
But through all change, of figure, station, size,
I see no Mind, nor Mind's Effect arise.³⁷

This position was taken by Imlac when the much disputed question of the nature of the soul was introduced in *Rasselas* at the visit to the Egyptian tombs, that "scene of mortality."

31. *Works*, III, 364.

32. *Ibid.*, III, 535.

33. *Spectator*, No. 111.

34. *Philosophical Essays*, Essay II, sec. 3.

35. *Night Thoughts*, I, 99-100.

36. *Anti-Lucretius*, p. 210.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

"Some, answered Imlac, have indeed said that the soul is material, but I can scarcely believe that any man has thought it, who knew how to think; for all the conclusions of reason enforce the immateriality of mind, and all the notices of sense and investigations of science concur to prove the unconsciousness of matter.

"It was never supposed that cogitation is inherent in matter, or that every particle is a thinking being. Yet, if any part of matter be devoid of thought, what part can we suppose to think? Matter can differ from matter only in form, density, bulk, motion, and direction of motion: to which of these, however varied or combined, can consciousness be annexed? To be round or square, to be solid or fluid, to be great or little, to be moved slowly or swiftly one way or another, are modes of material existence, all equally alien from the nature of cogitation. If matter be once without thought, it can only be made to think by some new modification, but all the modifications which it can admit are equally unconnected with cogitative powers."

"But the materialists, said the astronomer, urge that matter may have qualities with which we are unacquainted."

"He who will determine, returned Imlac, against that which he knows, because there may be something which he knows not; he that can set hypothetical possibility against acknowledged certainty, is not to be admitted among reasonable beings. All that we know of matter is, that matter is inert, senseless and lifeless; and if this conviction cannot be opposed but by referring us to something that we know not, we have all the evidence that human intellect can admit. If that which is known may be over-ruled by that which is unknown, no being, not omniscient, can arrive at certainty."

"Yet let us not, said the astronomer, too arrogantly limit the Creator's power."

"It is no limitation of omnipotence, replied the poet, to suppose that one thing is not consistent with another, that the same proposition cannot be at once true and false, that the same number cannot be even and odd, that cogitation cannot be conferred on that which is created incapable of cogitation."

"I know not, said Nekayah, any great use of this question. Does that immateriality, which, in my opinion, you have sufficiently proved, necessarily include eternal duration?"

"Of immateriality, said Imlac, our ideas are negative, and therefore obscure. Immateriality seems to imply a natural power of perpetual duration as a consequence of exemption from all causes of decay: whatever perishes, is destroyed by the solution of its contexture, and separation of its

parts; nor can we conceive how that which has no parts, and therefore admits no solution, can be naturally corrupted or impaired."

"I know not, said Rasselas, how to conceive any thing without extension: what is extended must have parts, and you allow, that whatever has parts may be destroyed."

"Consider your own conceptions, replied Imlac, and the difficulty will be less. You will find substance without extension. An ideal form is no less real than material bulk: yet an ideal form has no extension. It is no less certain, when you think on a pyramid, that your mind possesses the idea of a pyramid, than that the pyramid itself is standing. What space does the idea of a pyramid occupy more than the idea of a grain of corn? or how can either idea suffer laceration? As is the effect such is the cause; as thought is, such is the power that thinks; a power impassive and inscrutable."

"But the Being, said Nekayah, whom I fear to name, the Being which made the soul, can destroy it."

"He, surely, can destroy it, answered Imlac, since, however unperishable, it receives from a superior nature its power of duration. That it will not perish by any inherent cause of decay, or principle of corruption, may be shown by philosophy; but philosophy can tell no more. That it will not be annihilated by him that made it, we must humbly learn from higher authority."

The whole assembly stood a while silent and collected. "Let us return, said Rasselas, from this scene of mortality."³⁸

A mind so imperfect in its form and operation as Locke conceived it to be, would seem sufficiently handicapped in the perception of the agreement and disagreement of ideas required for knowledge without the additional supposition that all minds are tainted with a "sort of madness," resulting from the association of ideas. In his treatise on *Human Nature* (1650), Hobbes had mentioned the connection of ideas to account for the interrelationships of thought, saying, "The cause of the coherence or consequence of one conception to another, is their first coherence or consequence at that time when they are produced by Sense."³⁹ This simple sequence of ideas was followed by Dryden in the Preface to the *Fables* (1700).

In the mean time, to follow the third of my discourse, (as thoughts, ac-

38. Johnson, *Rasselas*, cap. 47: ed. Chapman, pp. 214-18.

39. *Human Nature*, cap. 4, sec. 2.

cording to Mr. Hobbes, have always some connection,) so from Chaucer I was led to think on Boccace, who was not only his contemporary, but also pursued the same studies.⁴⁰

Watts, coming after Locke, saw in the mind's power to associate its ideas a great instrument for improving knowledge.

WHEN you would remember new Things or Words, *endeavour to associate and connect them with some Words or Things which you have well known before, and which are fixed and established in your Memory*. This Association of Ideas is of great Importance and Force, and may be of excellent Use in many Instances of Human Life.⁴¹

Locke's theory of the association of ideas differs from all others because he completely disregarded the possible advantages of this faculty of the understanding and wrongly named it a very disease of the mind, "the foundation of the greatest, I had almost said of all the errors in the world."⁴² If we recall that knowledge is the accurate perception of the true agreement or disagreement of ideas, we easily understand that only confusion can result from an agreement established in our minds between ideas which have no "*natural correspondence and connexion one with another*".⁴³

Ideas that in themselves are not all of kin, come to be so united in some men's minds, that it is very hard to separate them; they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang, always inseparable, show themselves together.⁴⁴

Akenside has followed Locke in describing this action of the mind.

40. *Poetical Works*, Cambridge Edition, p. 741.

41. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 17: ed. 1741, p. 273. Cf. Bacon, "Men help the memory by putting images of persons in places" (*Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 507). Cf. John Mason, *Self-Knowledge* (1745), I, xv, 5: "Join to the idea you would remember some other that is more familiar to you, which bears some similitude to it, either in its nature, or in the sound of the word by which it is expressed; or that hath some relation to it either in time or place. And then by recalling this, which is easily remembered, you will (by that concatenation, or connection of ideas, which Mr. Locke takes notice of) draw in that which is thus linked or joined with it; which otherwise you might hunt after in vain."

42. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 18.

43. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 5.

44. *Ibid.*

For when the diff'rent images of things
 By chance combin'd, have struck th' attentive soul
 With deeper impulse, or connected long,
 Have drawn her frequent eye; howe'er distinct
 Th' external scenes, yet oft th' ideas gain
 From that conjunction an eternal tie,
 And sympathy unbroken. Let the mind
 Recall one partner of the various league,
 Immediate, lo! the firm confed'rates rise.⁴⁵

Ideas thus erroneously associated in the mind by chance are kept in this union by the force of habit.

Custom settles habits of thinking in the understanding, as well as of determining in the will, and of motions in the body: all which seems to be but trains of motions in the animal spirits, which, once set a going, continue in the same steps they have been used to; which, by often treading, are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy, and as it were natural.⁴⁶

The association of ideas, this offspring of chance and custom, accounts for the unreasonable connection in some minds of the ideas of darkness and goblins.

The ideas of goblins and sprites have really no more to do with darkness than light: yet let but a foolish maid inculcate these often on the mind of a child, and raise them there together, possibly he shall never be able to separate them again so long as he lives, but darkness shall ever afterwards bring with it those frightful ideas, and they shall be so joined, that he can no more bear the one than the other.⁴⁷

Locke made this observation in hope that "those who have children, or the charge of their education, would think it worth their while diligently to watch, and carefully to prevent the undue connexion of ideas in the minds of young people."⁴⁸ In the interest of children's mental health, his sage remarks were repeated by Addison in a paper on the ghosts which were supposed to haunt the estate of Sir Roger.⁴⁹

45. *Pleasures of Imagination*, III, 312-20.

46. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 6.

47. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 10. Cf. Bacon, "Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other" ("Of Death": *Essays*, No. 2).

48. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 8.

49. *Spectator*, No. 110.

That most of our absurd fears and needless mental agonies can be attributed to the mind's pathological tendency to associate incongruous ideas, is illustrated by a little incident recorded in the *Essay*.

A friend of mine knew one perfectly cured of madness by a very harsh and offensive operation. The gentleman who was thus recovered, with great sense of gratitude and acknowledgment owned the cure all his life after, as the greatest obligation he could have received; but, whatever gratitude and reason suggested to him, he could never bear the sight of the operator: that image brought back with it the idea of that agony which he suffered from his hands, which was too mighty and intolerable for him to endure.⁵⁰

Hardly less real and terrible associations are formed, Shenstone tells us, in the mind of a child between the birch tree and the rod.

And all in sight does rise a Birchen Tree,
Which *Learning* near *her* little Dome did stow,
Whilom a Twig of small Regard to see,
Tho' now so wide its waving Branches flow;
And work the simple Vassals mickle Woe:
For not a Wind might curl the Leaves, that blew,
But their Limbs shudder'd, and their Pulse beat low;
And as they look'd, they found their Horror grew,
And shap'd it into Rods, and tingled at the View.⁵¹

To this stanza of the *School-Mistress*, the author has added in the Index the following note: "A Circumstance in the Situation of the Mansion of early Discipline, discovering the surprizing Influence of the Connection of Ideas."⁵²

Very humourous, as well as serious, happenings result from an irrational association of ideas engraven by habit upon the mind. "If I add one more," Locke said in citing such instances, "it is only for the pleasant oddness of it."

It is of a young gentleman, who, having learnt to dance, and that to great perfection, there happened to stand an old trunk in the room where he learnt. The idea of this remarkable piece of household stuff had so mixed

50. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 14.

51. *School-Mistress*, st. 3 (1742 ed.).

52. William Shenstone, *The School-Mistress, a Poem*. 1742, facsimile ed., Oxford, 1924, Index.

itself with the turns and steps of all his dances, that though in that chamber he could dance excellently well, yet it was only whilst that trunk was there; nor could he perform well in any other place, unless that or some such other trunk had its due position in the room.⁵³

It is largely with such queer and ridiculous consequences of the association of ideas that Sterne, the greatest exponent of this theory in English literature, was regularly concerned. The first chapter of the first book of *Tristram* prepares us for the calamities that will arise from this disease of the mind, which was particularly hereditary in the Shandy family.

—You have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transfused from father to son, etc. etc.—and a great deal to that purpose: —Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motions and activity, and the different tracts and trains you put them into, so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a halfpenny matter,—away they go clattering like hey-go mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden-walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it.

“Pray, my Dear,” quoth my mother, “have you not forgot to wind up the clock?”—⁵⁴

Tristram's birth was the preposterous and miserable result of an abnormal association of ideas, worn by habit into the minds of his parents. This same operation of the understanding was constantly at work in Uncle Toby's poor head.

WHEN Trim came in and told my father, that Dr. Slop was in the kitchen, and busy in making a bridge—my uncle Toby—the affair of the jack-boots having just then raised a train of military ideas in his brain—took it instantly for granted that Dr. Slop was making a model of the marquis d'Hôpital's bridge.—"Tis very obliging in him, quoth my uncle Toby;—pray give my humble service to Dr. Slop, Trim, and tell him I thank him heartily.⁵⁵

53. *Essay*, II, xxxiii, 16.

54. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. I, cap. 1: ed. Cross, pp. 1-2.

55. *Ibid.*, bk. III, cap. 26: ed. Cross, p. 170.

It is often difficult to determine what portion of the confusion is owing to the imperfection of words as well, since words call forth these strange associations, as in the following episode:

—My young master in London is dead! said Obadiah.—

—A green satin night-gown of my mother's, which had been twice scoured, was the first idea which Obadiah's exclamation brought into Susannah's head.—Well might Locke write a chapter upon the imperfections of words.—Then, quoth Susannah, we must all go into mourning.—But note a second time: the word mourning, notwithstanding Susannah made use of it herself— failed also of doing its office; it excited not one single idea, tinged either with gray or black,—all was green.—The green satin night-gown hung there still.

—O! 'twill be the death of my poor mistress, cried Susannah.—My mother's whole wardrobe followed.—What a procession! her red damask,—her orange tawney,—her white and yellow lutestrings,—her brown taffata,—her bone-laced caps, her bed-gowns, and comfortable under-petticoats.⁵⁶

Finally, whiskers are introduced into the pages of *Tristram Shandy* by a wild association of ideas which Sterne will not divulge, and whiskers are dismissed from polite conversation because of the foolish "accessory ideas" they inspired.⁵⁷

Mr. Cross has already observed that the association of ideas furnished Sterne with a theory for the arrangement of the episodes of *Tristram Shandy*, thereby making it the first "stream of consciousness" novel in English literature.

On Locke's psychology, true so far as it goes, *Tristram Shandy* was whimsically organized. All of Sterne's digressions, which he called "the sunshine of life, and the soul of reading," start from some ludicrous incident or from some casual remark. Thus, for obvious examples, the mishap to Tristram's nose at birth leads to a disquisition on long and short noses; and the mistake at his christening to the influence that good and bad names exert upon character and to the question whether the name a child receives in baptism must remain forever unalterable. Likewise a mild oath uttered by Dr. Slop when he cuts a finger provokes a discussion over the proper gradations in cursing, which ends with the recital of a terrible formula of excommunication once used by the Church of Rome.⁵⁸

56. *Ibid.*, bk. V, cap. 7: ed. Cross, pp. 289–90.

57. *Ibid.*, bk. V, cap. 1: ed. Cross, pp. 276, 280.

58. Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, ed. Cross, p. xi.

The principle of the association of ideas is just as clearly at work in the *Sentimental Journey*.

WHAT the old French officer had delivered upon travelling, bringing Polonius's advice to his son upon the same subject into my head—and that bringing in Hamlet; and Hamlet the rest of Shakespeare's works, I stopp'd at the Quai de Conti in my return home, to purchase the whole set.⁵⁹

This unique manner of writing was adopted by Henry Mackenzie for his *Man of Feeling* which appeared three years after the *Sentimental Journey*, in 1771. Sterne's redeeming sense of drama prevented him from surrendering completely to this method of composition, though there are moments in each of the novels when the habit of following the association of ideas seems to frustrate any hope that the action will ever right itself and proceed on a logical course.

But Mr. Cross, who was right in calling attention to the significance of the association of ideas in producing the peculiar order of events in Sterne's novels, has not, it seems, paid sufficient notice to the fact that it was upon an unhealthy trait of mind, which Locke said is the parent of confusion and chaos, that Sterne has established his principles of writing, with results which would in no way incline one to disagree with the author of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*. To the association of ideas may be traced that quality of madness which overlies and brightens the pages of *Tristram* and the *Sentimental Journey*. Locke, who put the theory of associated ideas into popular form, would have been the first person to assign not only the order of Sterne's novels, but also their irrational aspects to the writer's undue regard for an unfortunate mental phenomenon. What else could one expect but madness when noses, whiskers, clocks, Christian sacraments, and petty oaths like "pugh" and "psha" produce such ridiculous and mistaken associations in the eccentric minds of Sterne's uninhibited characters? Healthy-minded people in the Eighteenth Century probably allowed themselves but a very few unnatural associations of ideas, and these they would surely never indulge so intemperately as the inmates of Shandy Hall. I have little doubt that in the path of Locke's influence an exaggerated tendency to associate discordant ideas was considered something of a mental

59. Sterne, *Sentimental Journey*, "The Fille de Chambre—Paris": ed. Cross, p. 98.

disease, and that Sterne knowingly afflicted his characters with this mild psychosis.

Incidentally, there has been no chance to refer to a quite different and un-Lockian use of the association of ideas made by Boswell, who has said:

Much of the effect of musick, I am satisfied, is owing to the association of ideas. That air, which instantly and irresistibly excites in the Swiss, when in a foreign land, the *maladie du pays*, has, I am told, no intrinsick power of sound. And I know from my own experience, that Scotch reels, though brisk, make me melancholy, because I used to hear them in my early years, at a time when Mr. Pitt called for soldiers "from the mountains of the north," and numbers of brave Highlanders were going abroad, never to return. Whereas the airs in "The Beggar's Opera," many of which are very soft, never fail to render me gay, because they are associated with the warm sensations and high spirits of London.⁶⁰

Twice at least Boswell speaks of the happy London associations which the airs of Gay's opera recalled to his mind.

I own, I should be very sorry to have "The Beggar's Opera" suppressed; for there is in it so much of real London life, so much brilliant wit, and such a variety of airs, which, from early association of ideas, engage, soothe, and enliven the mind, that no performance which the theatre exhibits, delights me more.⁶¹

Realizing that the mind is possibly material, weak in perception and failing in memory, lazy, prejudiced, and often led astray by the wayward association of ideas, one is better prepared to examine the limits of human knowledge. We are for ever confined, it must be repeated, to the simple ideas of sensation and reflection, as "it is not in the power of the most exalted wit, or enlarged understanding, by any quickness or variety of thought, to *invent* or *frame* one new simple idea in the mind."⁶² Swift has related this restriction to the possibilities of all poetic invention.

Now the utmost a poor poet can do, is to get by heart a list of the cardinal virtues, and deal them with his utmost liberality to his hero, or his patron: he may ring the changes as far as it will go, and vary his phrase till he has

60. *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, III, 198.

61. *Ibid.*, II, 368.

62. *Essay*, II, ii, 2.

talked round: but the reader quickly finds it is all pork, with a little variety of sauce. For there is no inventing terms of art beyond our ideas; and, when our ideas are exhausted, terms of art must be so too.⁶³

The simile of ringing the changes applies to all man's ideas; vary them as we will, our thoughts, even our guesses,⁶⁴ cannot extend beyond the simple ideas of sensation and reflection. Human ignorance, however, lies not so much in a want of ideas as in our inability to perceive the agreement and disagreement of those ideas which sensation and reflection have presented for the mind's consideration. "It would be well with us," Locke said, "if our knowledge were but as large as our ideas."⁶⁵ Ideas, few as they are, exhaust the understanding, and our minds are too weak to grasp that small amount of knowledge lying within our reach.

The limits of human knowledge are best defined by reviewing what we know concerning the existence of ourselves, material substance, spiritual beings other than man, and finally of God. Of the existence of ourselves we have a direct, intuitive knowledge, which may dispense with the proofs and demonstrations of reason. Every sensation of pleasure and pain convinces us that we have a being.⁶⁶

But material substance escapes us so completely that it is a most "incurable part of ignorance."⁶⁷ The existence of matter is proved by physical sensation,⁶⁸ especially the unavoidable feelings of pleasure and pain produced in us by external objects. Let one at noon but turn his eyes to the sun, Locke would say, and be assured of the reality of matter.⁶⁹

And if our dreamer pleases to try whether the glowing heat of a glass furnace be barely a wandering imagination in a drowsy man's fancy, by putting his hand into it, he may perhaps be wakened into a certainty greater than he could wish, that it is something more than bare imagination.⁷⁰

This reminds one of Johnson's "striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone" in the presence of Boswell, thereby refuting

63. *Tale of a Tub: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, 45.

64. *Essay*, II, xxiii, 13.

65. *Essay*, IV, iii, 6.

66. *Essay*, IV, ix, 3.

67. *Essay*, IV, iii, 12.

68. *Essay*, IV, xi, 3.

69. *Essay*, IV, xi, 5.

70. *Essay*, IV, xi, 8.

"Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter."⁷¹ Though we are certain matter exists and also possess through sensation some ideas of its primary and secondary qualities, what substance really is can never be known to man—except by revelation.⁷² Locke therefore believed that "*natural philosophy is not capable of being made a science.*"⁷³

Mystery, which was fleeing before the light cast upon the understanding in the first part of Locke's *Essay*, now returns with the realization that we have been enlightened but to see that all the physical world baffles the mind and defeats human inquiry. Swift, learning that the senses do not take us beyond the colour, shape, and size of material objects and that the actual qualities of substances remain unknown,⁷⁴ reverently accepted these mysteries of nature along with those of religion.⁷⁵ No English writer was more sensible of this aspect of man's ignorance than Sterne, who, having taken a mirthful approach to the *Essay*, nevertheless followed Locke to the most serious conclusions of his philosophy. Three times he repeated the phrase, "mysteries and riddles," in reference to the secrets of the material world. In *Tristram Shandy*, Book Four, Chapter Seventeen, he wrote:

We live amongst riddles and mysteries—the most obvious things, which come in our way, have dark sides, which the quickest sight cannot penetrate into; and even the clearest and most exalted understandings amongst us find ourselves puzzled and at a loss in almost every cranny of nature's works.

Later in the novel there is the sentence, "We live in a world beset on all sides with mysteries and riddles—,"⁷⁶ while in the *Sermons* we read:

That in many dark and abstracted questions of mere speculation, we should err—is not strange: we live amongst mysteries and riddles, and almost every thing which comes in our way, in one light or other, may be said to baffle our understandings.⁷⁷

71. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 471.

72. *Essay*, IV, vi, 14.

73. *Essay*, IV, xii, 10.

74. *Tale of a Tub: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, 120.

75. "On the Trinity": *Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, IV, 133, 137.

76. *Tristram Shandy*, bk. IX, cap. 22: ed. Cross, p. 508.

77. "Felix's Behaviour towards Paul Examined": *Sermons*, I, 222-3.

These riddles and mysteries of the natural world are discussed in more detail in his sermon on "The Ways of Providence Justified to Man."

Does not the meanest flower in the field, or the smallest blade of grass, baffle the understanding of the most penetrating mind?—Can the deepest enquirers after nature tell us, upon what particular size and motion of parts the various colours and tastes in vegetables depend;—why one shrub is laxative,—another restringent;—why arsenic or hellebore should lay waste this noble frame of ours,—or opium lock up all the inroads to our senses,—and plunder us in so merciless a manner of reason and understanding?—Nay, have not the most obvious things that come in our way dark sides, which the quickest sight cannot penetrate into; and do not the clearest and most exalted understandings find themselves puzzled, and at a loss, in every particle of matter?⁷⁸

We wonder how many in Yorick's congregation realized this was Locke's philosophy, and could recall a similar passage in the *Essay*.

I doubt not but if we could discover the figure, size, texture, and motion of the minute constituent parts of any two bodies, we should know without trial several of their operations one upon another; . . . Did we know the mechanical affections of the particles of rhubarb, hemlock, opium, and a man, . . . we should be able to tell beforehand that rhubarb will purge, hemlock kill, and opium make a man sleep.⁷⁹

Although we can never know perfectly any part of the natural world, we may discover many things about it which will be serviceable in human life. A utilitarian approach to nature is exactly what Locke advises.

Experiments and historical observations we may have, from which we may draw advantages of ease and health, and thereby increase our stock of conveniences for this life; but beyond this I fear our talents reach not, nor are our faculties, as I guess, able to advance.⁸⁰

The aim of natural studies, Locke argues, should be to utilize our imperfect knowledge of matter for practical ends and to seek physical discoveries comparable to the invention of printing and the com-

78. *Sermons*, II, 254.

79. *Essay*, IV, iii, 25.

80. *Essay*, IV, xii, 10.

pass, which have respectively spread knowledge and supplied man with useful commodities.⁸¹ It was such utilitarian philosophy, I suspect, that directed most Eighteenth-Century inquiries into nature. This "hunt of Pan" was conducted not by pure scientists alone but by individuals in all walks of life, for everyone who professed any intellectual interest seems to have concerned himself with natural philosophy and to have applied in a simple way the scientific method. It is reasonable to say that the scientific method was much more widely practised in the Eighteenth Century than in the Twentieth, for they realized then what we fail to see, that the scientific approach is a very simple one, which may be adopted and employed by all.

Johnson's practical interest in natural philosophy, as the various studies of nature were then called, was not uncharacteristic of the man of letters of his age. A love of chemistry never forsook Johnson throughout his life,⁸² and in his library where manuscripts were strewn about the floor there stood on his desk an apparatus for performing chemical experiments.⁸³ Johnson was always making little researches in one department or another of natural philosophy, partly to amuse himself in his moments of solitude,⁸⁴ partly also I think because he believed that humanity might possibly be benefited by a chance discovery of importance. The advantages resulting from science were definitely in Johnson's mind when he advised a young doctor going to America to be sure to observe carefully the vegetables and animals of that country with which philosophers were not well acquainted.

I hope you will furnish yourself with some books of natural history, and some glasses and other instruments of observation. Trust as little as you can to report; examine all you can by your own senses. I do not doubt but you will be able to add much to knowledge, and, perhaps, to medicine. Wild nations trust to simples; and, perhaps, the Peruvian bark is not the only specifick which those extensive regions may afford us.⁸⁵

Johnson's own experiments do not seem to have been world-shaking in their significance, but they are interesting. On one occasion while he was whetting a knife he by accident knicked one of his finger nails.

81. *Essay*, IV, xii, 12.

82. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 140.

83. *Ibid.*, I, 436.

84. *Ibid.*, III, 398.

85. *Ibid.*, I, 367-8.

He then measured the progress of this knick towards the end of the nail so that he might thus know the growth of nails.⁸⁶ On August 7, 1779, he performed a similar experiment when he shaved the hair on his arm and chest so that he might find out how much time is required for hair to grow.⁸⁷ Of less tonsorial interest is the experiment described in his diary for August 15, 1783, where he notes: "I cut from the vine 41 leaves, which weighed five oz. and a half, and eight scruples:—I lay them upon my book-case, to see what weight they will lose by drying."⁸⁸ One is reminded of Voltaire, who, having like Johnson this passion for making scientific observations, weighed with considerable difficulty a ton of red-hot iron.⁸⁹

The learn'd is happy nature to explore.⁹⁰

Johnson enjoyed the researches of others as well as his own, for at Beauclerk's house at Windsor we see him being entertained with experiments in natural philosophy,⁹¹ while during a visit in Wiltshire we find him attending experiments in new kinds of air where the name of the free-thinking Priestley was mentioned so often as to disgust him.⁹² In this interest in the various practical aspects of natural philosophy Johnson is only typical of the Eighteenth-Century scholar and thinker, who believed that a good deal of weighing, measuring, testing and the like would by all the laws of chance reveal facts about nature which would be serviceable to man. But final truths about material substance one never expected to learn, without departing upon Berkeleyan circumnavigations of the physical world.

Concerning the existence of spiritual beings other than man and God, our minds are "in the dark,"⁹³ and "what we hope to know of *separate spirits* in this world, we must, I think, expect only from revelation."⁹⁴

Angels of all sorts are naturally beyond our discovery; and all those intelligences, whereof it is likely there are more orders than of corporeal

86. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, III, 398, n. 3.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

89. S. G. Tallentyre, *Life of Voltaire*, New York, 1905, p. 95.

90. Pope, *Essay on Man*, II, 263.

91. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 250.

92. *Ibid.*, IV, 237–8.

93. *Essay*, IV, iii, 17.

94. *Essay*, IV, xii, 12.

substances, are things whereof our natural faculties give us no certain account at all.⁹⁵

By reasoning from the classic philosophical concept of a chain of life we may, however, become almost certain that several grades and degrees of intellectual beings rise between man and God.

It is not impossible to conceive, nor repugnant to reason, that there may be many species of spirits, as much separated and diversified one from another by distinct properties whereof we have no ideas, as the species of sensible things are distinguished one from another by qualities which we know and observe in them. That there should be more species of intelligent creatures above us, than there are of sensible and material below us, is probable to me from hence: that in all the visible corporeal world, we see no chasms or gaps. All quite down from us the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series of things, that in each remove differ very little one from the other. There are fishes that have wings, and are not strangers to the airy region: and there are some birds that are inhabitants of the water, whose blood is cold as fishes, and their flesh so like in taste that the scrupulous are allowed them on fish-days. There are animals so near of kin both to birds and beasts that they are in the middle between both: amphibious animals link the terrestrial and aquatic together; seals live at land and sea, and porpoises have the warm blood and entrails of a hog; not to mention what is confidently reported of mermaids, or seamen. There are some brutes that seem to have as much knowledge and reason as some that are called men: and the animal and vegetable kingdoms are so nearly joined, that, if you will take the lowest of one and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them: and so on, till we come to the lowest and the most inorganical parts of matter, we shall find everywhere that the several species are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees. And when we consider the infinite power and wisdom of the Maker, we have reason to think that it is suitable to the magnificent harmony of the universe, and the great design and infinite goodness of the Architect, that the species of creatures should also, by gentle degrees, ascend upward from us toward his infinite perfection, as we see they gradually descend from us downwards: which if it be probable, we have reason then to be persuaded that there are far more species of creatures above us than there are beneath; we being, in degrees of perfection, much more remote from the infinite being of God than we are from the lowest state of being, and that which ap-

95. *Essay*, IV, iii, 27.

proaches nearest to nothing. And yet of all those distinct species, . . . we have no clear distinct ideas.⁹⁶

The chain of life, as Locke imagined it, was the most popular concept of Eighteenth-Century thought, for it was examined and generally approved by all philosophical parties, Watts and Young of the conservative right, Pope and Bolingbroke of the left, and Addison and Thomson representing the center. Stationed upon the scale of life, a man may look upward in the direction of angels and downward upon lowest living beings, as Addison has done.

If the scale of being rises by such a regular progress so high as man, we may by a parity of reason suppose that it still proceeds gradually through those beings which are of a superior nature to him, since there is an infinitely greater space and room for different degrees of perfection, between the Supreme Being and man, than between man and the most despicable insect. This consequence of so great a variety of beings which are superior to us, from that variety which is inferior to us, is made by Mr. Locke in a passage which I shall here set down, after having premised that notwithstanding there is such infinite room between man and his Maker for the creative power to exert itself in, it is impossible that it should ever be filled up, since there will be still an infinite gap or distance between the highest created being and the power which produced him.

Following a quotation from the paragraph of the *Essay* given above, Addison concludes

that he, who in one respect is associated with angels and archangels, may look upon a being of infinite perfection as his father, and the highest order of spirits as his brethren, may in another respect say to corruption, "Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister."⁹⁷

The chain of life, by no means intended to indicate man's almost evolutionary relationship to lower animals, was wholly a device for looking up towards angels, in a manner well suited to the optimism of Edward Young's philosophy.

Look nature thro', 'tis neat gradation all.
By what minute degrees her scale ascends!
Each middle nature join'd at each extreme,

To that above it join'd, to that beneath.
 Parts, into parts reciprocally shot,
 Abhor divorce: what love of union reigns!
 Here, dormant matter waits a call to life;
 Half-life, half-death, join there; here, life and sense;
 There, sense from reason steals a glimm'ring ray;
 Reason shines out in man. But how preserv'd
 The chain unbroken upward, to the realms
 Of incorporeal life? Those realms of bliss,
 Where death hath no dominion? Grant a make
 Half-mortal, half-immortal; earthy, part,
 And part ethereal; grant the soul of man
 Eternal; or in man the series ends.
 Wide yawns the gap; connection is no more;
 Check'd reason halts; her next step wants support;
 Striving to climb, she tumbles from her scheme;
 A scheme, analogy pronounc'd so true;
 Analogy, man's surest guide below.⁹⁸

||

That Young is arguing for the existence of higher spiritual beings by analogy, just as Locke, suggests that his source was the *Essay*. Thomson is brief, clear, but slightly questioning on this problem of the reality of species of intelligent creatures superior to man.

High Heaven forbids the bold presumptuous strain,
 Whose wisest will has fixed us in a state
 That must not yet to pure perfection rise:
 Besides, who knows, how, raised to higher life,
 From stage to stage, the vital scale ascends?⁹⁹

The uncertainty expressed in these lines of *Spring* was repeated in *Summer*.

Has any seen
 The mighty chain of beings, lessening down
 From infinite perfection to the brink
 Of dreary nothing, desolate abyss!
 From which astonished thought recoiling turns?¹⁰⁰

m

98. *Night Thoughts*, VI, 714-34.

100. *Summer*, 333-7.

99. *Spring*, 374-8.

Southeby tells us it was Wesley's opinion

that there is a chain of beings advancing by degrees from the lowest to the highest point—from an atom of unorganized matter, to the highest of the archangels; an opinion consonant to the philosophy of the bards, and confirmed by science, as far as our physiological knowledge extends.¹⁰¹

If it would convince man that he occupies but a very low place in the great intellectual scheme of the universe, Bolingbroke was prepared to believe in the existence of angels:

the gradation of sense and intelligence in our own [world], from animal to animal, and of intelligence, principally, up to man, as well as the very abrupt manner, if I may say so, in which this evidently unfinished intellectual system stops at the human species, gives great reason to believe, that this gradation is continued upwards in other systems, as we perceive it to be continued downwards in ours. We may well suspect that ours is the lowest, in this respect, of all mundane systems; since the rational is so nearly connected, as it is here, with the irrational: and there may be as much difference between some other creature of God, without having recourse to angels and archangels, and man, as there is between a man and an oyster.¹⁰²

Simply by reversing the emphasis Watts was able to support the theory of the chain of life in almost identical words:

there may be as many various Ranks of Beings in the invisible World in a constant Gradation superior to us, as we ourselves are superior to all the Ranks of Being beneath us in this visible World; even though we descend downward far below the *Ant* and the *Worm*, the *Snail* and the *Oyster*, to the least and to the dullest animated Atoms which are discovered to us by *Microscopes*.¹⁰³

Incidentally, from what we here read in Bolingbroke and Watts, it is permissible to assume that in Eighteenth-Century thought the oyster rested very near the lowest link in the chain of life, just as it does in Holbach's *System of Nature*.¹⁰⁴ Locke would be in agreement, for he said, "We may, . . . from the make of an oyster or

101. *Life of Wesley*, ed. Fitzgerald, II, 72.

102. *Works*, IV, 177.

103. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 16: ed. 1741, pp. 224-5.

104. Morley, *Diderot and the Encyclopædists*, II, 170.

cockle, reasonably conclude that it has not so many, nor so quick senses as a man, or several other animals."¹⁰⁵ The oyster was again discredited in Prior's *Dialogue between Locke and Montaigne*, when John, the servant, said to the cook, "Tho you have stewed many a Barrel and quart of Oysters, you never examined if an Oyster was capable of thinking; and tho you have seen many a hundred of Old Men, you never found out that an Old Man, who has lost his Senses is exceedingly like an Oyster."¹⁰⁶ An age which gave its thoughtful consideration to the intellectual aptitude of the oyster was not undiscerning in things of the mind.

The chain of life, used by Locke as an analogy to prove the existence of intellectual beings higher than man, was an adaptable theory, fitting so well into every philosophy that, if it was suited for the *Night Thoughts*, it was also applicable to the scheme set forth in the *Essay on Man*.

See, through this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth.
Above, how high progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!
Vast chain of being! which from God began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect, what no eye can see,
No glass can reach; from infinite to thee,
From thee to nothing. On superior pow'rs
Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation leave a void,
Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroyed:
From nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.¹⁰⁷

The chain of life is thus brought to support Pope's necessitarian doctrine, which commands us to submit to our human lot and forego desires for powers and perfections not belonging to our position in the scale of being. If more knowledge, more goodness, greater strength were given to man, a link in this vast chain would be broken, whereupon the whole creation would be destroyed. Such is man's

^{105.} *Essay*, II, ix, 13. This paragraph is quoted entire in the *Spectator*, No. 121.

^{106.} *Dialogues of the Dead and Other Works in Prose and Verse*, ed. Waller, p. 245.

^{107.} *Essay on Man*, I, 233-46.

restless ambition, however, that he is envious both of angels of the ascending scale and of brutes of the descending order.

What would this Man? now upward will he soar,
And little less than angel, would be more!
Now looking downwards, just as grieved appears
To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.¹⁰⁸

Pope has given to the theory of the chain of life a meaning it did not have in Locke's *Essay* when he used it to prove the rightness of whatever is, especially the propriety of the condition of humanity.

The most impressive thing about the chain of life is its congeniality and adaptability, when it can be accepted by men of such varied philosophical opinions as Young and Pope, Watts and Bolingbroke. Pamela turned this pliant theory to a convenience all her own, finding comfort in the humiliations of an inferior social position in the lines,

Nor let the rich the lowest slave disdain:
He's equally a link of Nature's chain.¹⁰⁹

Since this agreeable hypothesis, however, undertakes to prove the existence of intellectual beings, angels and archangels, ranging in neat gradation from man upward to God, its universal acceptance allows one to conclude that the Eighteenth-Century heaven was thronged with a multitude of spirits, to which man was allied and bound, actually chained. The age of reason, however it may have divorced itself from the other world, was not unattended by the ministers of grace.

Thus far we have considered man's knowledge concerning the existence of himself, of the physical world outside himself, and of intellectual beings above him. Proceeding now to a fourth question, we learn that the existence of God, neither doubtful nor problematical like that of intermediate spirits, may be proved to our complete satisfaction simply by demonstration, without the assistance of analogy or revelation. Though we have no innate idea of God,¹¹⁰ by reasoning that He is the first cause, His existence becomes a certain and undeniable part of knowledge. Knowing that we exist and that

108. *Essay on Man*, I, 173-6.

109. Richardson, *Pamela: Works*, ed. Stephen, I, 293.

110. *Essay*, IV, x, 1.

something cannot be produced by nothing, "it is an evident demonstration, that *from eternity there has been something.*"¹¹¹ That Being furthermore is most powerful, for He is the source and original of all the forces which have been present in the world and universe from the beginning.¹¹² When we realize that in ourselves there is perception and knowledge, which could not be created by ignorance, we also become certain that from eternity there has been a knowing Being.¹¹³

Thus, from the consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our own constitutions, our reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth,—*That there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being.*¹¹⁴

On a desolate island Robinson Crusoe convinced Friday of God's being by this same argument,¹¹⁵ and in the fashionable salons of Paris Yorick passed his time demonstrating to the ladies the necessity of a first cause.¹¹⁶ The conception of God as the first cause, acknowledged by Bacon¹¹⁷ and Hobbes¹¹⁸ and adopted by Locke in the *Essay*, has been so common and popular in all ages with all men, regardless of faith or philosophy, that Pope's "Universal Prayer" quite naturally addressed the "Great First Cause."

While there is no difficulty in knowing that God exists, when we would imagine the nature and attributes of the Almighty Being, we immediately realize, as did Pope, the meanness of the simple ideas to which we are restricted.

Of God above or man below,
What can we reason but from what we know?¹¹⁹

Our idea of God can contain therefore nothing more than several simple ideas raised to infinity in the manner explained by Addison.

If we consider the idea which wise men, by the light of reason, have framed of the Divine Being, it amounts to this: that He has in Him all

111. *Essay*, IV, x, 3.

112. *Essay*, IV, x, 4.

113. *Essay*, IV, x, 5.

114. *Essay*, IV, x, 6.

115. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, London, 1910, p. 202.

116. Sterne, *Sentimental Journey*, "Paris": ed. Cross, p. 155.

117. "Of Atheism": *Essays*, No. 16.

118. *Leviathan*, Part I, cap. 12.

119. *Essay on Man*, I, 17–18.

the perfection of a spiritual nature; and since we have no notion of any kind of spiritual perfection but what we discover in our own souls, we join infinitude to each kind of these perfections, and what is a faculty in an human soul becomes an attribute in God. We exist in place and time, the Divine Being fills the immensity of space with His presence, and inhabits eternity. We are possessed of a little power and a little knowledge, the Divine Being is almighty and omniscient. In short, by adding infinity to any kind of perfection we enjoy, and by joining all these different kinds of perfections in one being, we form our idea of the great Sovereign of nature.

Though every one who thinks must have made this observation, I shall produce Mr. Locke's authority to the same purpose, out of his essay on Human Understanding.¹²⁰

Here Addison quotes the following passage from the *Essay*:

For if we examine the idea we have of the incomprehensible Supreme Being, we shall find that we come by it the same way; and that the complex ideas we have both of God, and separate spirits, are made of the simple ideas we receive from reflection: v.g. having, from what we experiment in ourselves, got the ideas of existence and duration; of knowledge and power; of pleasure and happiness; and of several other qualities and powers, which it is better to have than to be without; when we would frame an idea the most suitable we can to the Supreme Being, we enlarge every one of these with our idea of infinity; and so putting them together, make our complex idea of God.¹²¹

In forming a conception of the Deity man feels especially hampered, for God cannot be defined in terms of our limited ideas though we raise to infinity those intellectual and spiritual powers which are considered the perfection of humanity. Noble as the human conception of intelligence appears, the mind of God may differ from that of man in kind as well as in degree, for certainly the Deity is not obliged to receive ideas from sensation. Worthy as man's conception of goodness may be, Bolingbroke added, God's notion of virtue may be wholly unlike that of man, wherefore man in doing what he considers righteous may be opposing directly the will of God.¹²² In carrying Locke's argument to this vicious conclusion, which would leave hu-

^{120.} *Spectator*, No. 531.

^{121.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 33.

^{122.} *Works*, IV, 86.

manity without sure moral guidance, Bolingbroke departed from both the reasoning and the spirit of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, and was rightly challenged by Gray¹²³ and Fielding.¹²⁴ Locke never questioned the correctness of our knowledge of God's moral commands as revealed in the Bible, but His personal traits of mind and body he thought must remain for ever an unsearchable mystery. While Bacon believed that "it has pleased God of his goodness to accommodate himself to the capacity of man,"¹²⁵ so that He is cognizable in all His characteristics, after Locke the general opinion is that human knowledge of divine things is like a blind man's knowledge of light and colour.¹²⁶ Familiar become such accounts of man's ignorance of God as the following in Goldsmith:

Surely all men are blind and ignorant of truth. Mankind wanders, unknowing his way, from morning till evening. Where shall we turn after happiness; or is it wisest to desist from the pursuit?—Like reptiles in a corner of some stupendous palace, we peep from our holes, look about us, wonder at all we see, but are ignorant of the great architect's design. Oh, for a revelation of Himself, for a plan of his universal system!¹²⁷

To assist mankind beyond the narrow and confining limits of actual knowledge, there are two auxiliaries, probability and faith.

Probability . . . , being to supply the defect of our knowledge, and to guide us where that fails, is always conversant about propositions whereof we have no certainty, but only some inducements to receive them for true.¹²⁸

Probable truths regarding matters of fact that permit human observation and yet cannot be known, may be established by the combined judgment of mankind.

The first . . . and *highest degree of probability*, is, when the general consent of all men, in all ages, as far as it can be known, concurs with a man's

123. "Essay on the Philosophy of Lord Bolingbroke": *Works*, ed. Gosse, I, (287)–91.

124. "Fragment of a Comment on Lord Bolingbroke's *EssaysWorks*, ed. Browne, X, (325)–39.

125. *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning: Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 503.

126. Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, I, 115.

127. *Citizen of the World*, Letter 22. 128. *Essay*, IV, xv, 4.

constant and never-failing experience in like cases, to confirm the truth of any particular matter of fact attested by fair witnesses.¹²⁹

If, for instance, it cannot be demonstrated that matter is senseless, the probability that it is inanimate becomes almost a certainty since this is the testimony and general consent of all men in all ages, and it agrees with our own constant experience. History is an example of a subject determined wholly by probability. Since it is impossible to examine by ourselves any supposed historical fact,¹³⁰ the degree to which a recorded event of the past rises from probability to certainty depends entirely upon the worth of the testimony of other people. To the early Eighteenth-Century scorn of history numerous reasons have been assigned, as explanations also have been given for the return to history that characterized the latter part of the century.¹³¹ Among the causes for the early unpopularity of this study, it seems reasonable to suggest that the sheer inaccuracy of the subject, implied in Locke's statement that history is altogether a matter of probability, would have made it an undesirable pursuit in an age when thinkers were trying to be very exact and scientific. There is a little evidence at least to show that history suffered on this account in the Eighteenth Century. Take the brief but striking remark of Walpole's father, "Any thing but history, for history must be false."¹³² Johnson is equally prejudiced against this "shallow" species of writing, because it is so conjectural. "We must consider," he says, "how very little history there is; I mean real authentick history. That certain Kings reigned, and certain battles were fought, we can depend upon as true; but all the colouring, all the philosophy, of history is conjecture."¹³³

While all mankind must frequently rely upon probability in matters concerning the present and past where certain knowledge is impossible, the individual is constantly obliged to seek refuge in probability in regulating his conduct and opinions, unless he would be a complete sceptic.¹³⁴

129. *Essay*, IV, xvi, 6.

130. *Essay*, IV, xvi, 7-11.

131. Carl Becker, *Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*, New Haven, 1932, cap. 3.

132. Quoted in *Walpoliana*, 2 vols., London, [1799], I, 60. No. 79.

133. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, II, 365-6.

134. *Essay*, IV, xvi, 2.

Who almost is there that hath the leisure, patience, and means to collect together all the proofs concerning most of the opinions he has, so as safely to conclude that he hath a clear and full view; and that there is no more to be alleged for his better information?¹³⁵

Therefore "in this fleeting state of action and blindness"¹³⁶ each person must confidently believe many things to be true without further surety than that others have testified to their truth. When, to the general consideration that all men are obliged to live in uncertainty regarding their minds that think, the substances they handle, and the God they worship, is added a realization of the incapacities of the individual for attaining what little knowledge there is, then we are ready to hear Locke say:

Therefore, as God has set some things in broad daylight; as he has given us some certain knowledge, though limited to a few things in comparison, probably as a taste of what intellectual creatures are capable of to excite in us a desire and endeavour after a better state: so, in the greatest part of our concerns, he has afforded us only the twilight, as I may so say, of probability; suitable, I presume, to that state of mediocrity and probationership he has been pleased to place us in here; wherein, to check our over-confidence and presumption, we might, by every day's experience, be made sensible of our short-sightedness and liableness to error; the sense whereof might be a constant admonition to us, to spend the days of this our pilgrimage with industry and care, in the search and following of that way which might lead us to a state of greater perfection. It being highly rational to think, even were revelation silent in the case, that, as men employ those talents God has given them here, they shall accordingly receive their rewards at the close of the day, when their sun shall set, and night shall put an end to their labours.¹³⁷

The Eighteenth Century, by no means the clear, bright land some have imagined, had its own twilight and shadows. It was a world not of certainties but only of probabilities, agreeable or not to men according to their tempers. For Thomas Paine it was even pleasant to consider the existence of Christ as a matter only of probability.¹³⁸

135. *Essay*, IV, xvi, 3.

136. *Essay*, IV, xvi, 4.

137. *Essay*, IV, xiv, 2.

138. *Age of Reason*, Part I, cap. 3: *Writings*, ed. Conway, IV, 27.

But for Bishop Butler, that gloomy soul who loved to walk alone and to walk at night, it was sorrowful to think that the existence of the Christian God behind the universe could be a matter only of probability and not of certainty.

The connection between Locke's discussion of probability and English literature must be of an indefinite nature, for it is hardly significant that Fielding has said a writer "must keep . . . within the rules of probability," as well as possibility.¹³⁹ For our general understanding of the Eighteenth Century it is, however, important to remember that in this age man was resorting in a democratic manner to the universal judgment of his fellow-men to establish probable truths in a world of uncertainties. Not only did the century present a state of society in which democracy seemed desirable, but it also entertained quite innocently a philosophical theory that truth was a matter of suffrage, wherefore we may say that the Eighteenth Century had an epistemological as well as a social and economic necessity for democracy. But that some might paradoxically have liberal theories of knowledge but conservative notions of society, we have as proof the examples of Johnson and Hume, both of whom considered suffrage the soundest test of truth and both of whom favoured subordination in society.

Invaluable as the universal judgment of mankind is, it is incapable of assisting us to probabilities or certainties regarding many matters, such as immortality, of which we desire knowledge. For our information regarding these questions we must depend upon the direct testimony of God. This testimony is given the name of revelation, and our assent to the truth revealed is called faith.¹⁴⁰ "Only we must be sure," Locke warns, "that it be a divine revelation, and that we understand it right."¹⁴¹ If we are rationally convinced that the revelation is from God, then there is the highest reason for giving our assent to the truth revealed, for God "cannot deceive nor be deceived."¹⁴²

The obvious emphasis Locke placed upon faith in matters transcending human investigation makes it unpardonable that Isaac Watts should have written a poem in which the philosopher is represented as an unwilling surrenderer to this principle of knowledge.

139. *Tom Jones*, bk. VIII, cap. 1: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 440.

140. *Essay*, IV, xvi, 14.

141. *Ibid.*

142. *Ibid.*

Faith, thou bright Cherub, speak and say
 Did ever Mind of mortal Race
 Cost thee more Toyl or larger Grace
 To melt and bend it to obey.
 'Twas hard to make so rich a Soul submit,
 And lay her shining Honours at thy sovereign Feet.¹⁴³

The poem ends with a picture of Locke in heaven, crying, in a dis-
 traught manner,

Forgive . . . , Ye Saints below
 The wav'ring and the cold Assent
 I gave to Themes divinely true;
 Can you admit the Blessed to repent?
 Eternal Darkness vail the Lines
 Of that unhappy Book,
 Where feeble Reason with false Lustre shines,
 Where the meer Mortal Pen mistook
 What the Coelestial meant!

While the book referred to was but a minor work of Locke, Watts's criticism calls for a defense from the *Essay* itself. Locke can be charged with giving cold assent to revealed truths only because he required that reason govern man's belief in revelations. There are some things, he contended, man's judgment would tell him concerning all revelations, and first, that God will reveal nothing contradictory to reason:

we cannot tell how to conceive that to come from God, the bountiful Author of our being, which, if received for true, must overturn all the principles and foundations of knowledge he has given us.¹⁴⁴

Thoroughly convinced that reason had been given to man by the Almighty for his guide in life, Locke was therefore certain that God would reveal nothing which would confuse and perplex the mind, and thereby "wholly destroy the most excellent part of his workmanship, our understandings."¹⁴⁵ Accordingly he concluded, "Nothing that is contrary to, and inconsistent with, the clear and self-evident

^{143.} "On Mr. Lock's Annotations upon several Parts of the New Testament, left behind him at his Death": *Horæ Lyricæ*, London, 1709, pp. 205-07.

^{144.} *Essay*, IV, xviii, 5.

^{145.} *Ibid.*

*dictates of reason, has a right to be urged or assented to as a matter of faith, wherein reason hath nothing to do.*¹⁴⁶ By this standard Locke was obliged to accept no truth revealed in the Bible without first putting it to the test of reason. To the dismay of Isaac Watts he did subject the Scriptures to this trial, the happy results of which he published in his book, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Compare this attitude with Bacon's passive opinion that "the more discordant therefore and incredible the Divine mystery is, the more honour is shown to God in believing it, and the nobler is the victory of faith."¹⁴⁷ Two philosophies could not be more opposed. Pascal like Bacon divorced reason from faith,¹⁴⁸ while Sir Thomas Browne felt that it was "no vulgar part of Faith, to believe a thing not only above, but contrary to Reason, and against the Arguments of our proper Senses."¹⁴⁹ In similar fashion Dryden was prepared to discard "dim" reason and accept all things on trust.

Rest then, my soul, from endless anguish freed:
Nor sciences thy guide, nor sense thy creed.
Faith is the best ensurer of thy bliss;
The bank above must fail before the venture miss.¹⁵⁰

Wesley strangely enough followed Locke in believing that nothing contradictory to reason should be accepted as a matter of faith,¹⁵¹ and at the same time he sought personal revelations of the divine will through bibliomancy and other forms of superstitious divination.

Faith in revelations without the curb of reason was caustically designated enthusiasm in a chapter Locke added to the fourth edition of the *Essay* in 1700.¹⁵² In a restricted and proper sense enthusiasm might mean a modest acceptance of the revealed truths of the Bible without consulting one's reason, but more particularly it describes the vain practices of those who believe the Divine Spirit is constantly disclosing truths to them personally, on no other ground than that God once promised He would show Himself to men.

146. *Essay*, IV, xviii, 10.

147. *Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning: Philosophical Works*, ed. Robertson, p. 631.

148. Bacon, *Novum Organum*, ed. Fowler, p. 53.

149. *Religio Medici*, Part I, sec. 10. 150. *Hind and the Panther*, I, 146-9.

151. Southey, *Life of Wesley*, ed. Fitzgerald, I, 27.

152. *Essay*, IV, xix.

Their minds being thus prepared, whatever groundless opinion comes to settle itself strongly upon their fancies, is an illumination from the Spirit of God, and presently of divine authority: and whatsoever odd action they find in themselves a strong inclination to do, that impulse is concluded to be a call or direction from heaven, and must be obeyed: it is a commission from above, and they cannot err in executing it.¹⁵³

An example of typical enthusiastic behaviour, characteristic of early Methodists, is to open the Bible at hazard, as Dinah does in *Adam Bede*, and take the first text one's eyes fall upon as a revelation from God to be followed in one's present difficulty. More often God speaks directly to the enthusiast's mind, as when Dinah receives the pleasant spiritual monition to marry Adam. Forgetting that people may have very sublime feelings despite their erroneous theories, Locke says such enthusiasts, because of their ignorance, vanity, or laziness, never subject their supposed revelations to the trial of reason.

Immediate revelation being a much easier way for men to establish their opinions and regulate their conduct, than the tedious and not always successful labour of strict reasoning, it is no wonder that some have been very apt to pretend to revelation, and to persuade themselves that they are under the peculiar guidance of heaven in their actions and opinions, especially in those of them which they cannot account for by the ordinary methods of knowledge and principles of reason. Hence we see, that, in all ages, men in whom melancholy has mixed with devotion, or whose conceit of themselves has raised them into an opinion of a greater familiarity with God, and a nearer admittance to his favour than is afforded to others, have often flattered themselves with a persuasion of an immediate intercourse with the Deity, and frequent communications from the Divine Spirit.¹⁵⁴

The origins and effects of enthusiasm are hardly different in Hume's definition which should for its similarity be read along with the passages from Locke's *Essay*. Hume writes:

But the mind of man is also subject to an unaccountable elevation and presumption, arising from prosperous success, from luxuriant health, from strong spirits, or from a bold and confident disposition. In such a state of mind, the imagination swells with great, but confused conceptions, to which no sublunary beauties or enjoyments can correspond.

153. *Essay*, IV, xix, 6.

154. *Essay*, IV, xix, 5.

Every thing mortal and perishable vanishes as unworthy of attention. And a full range is given to the fancy in the invisible regions or world of spirits, where the soul is at liberty to indulge itself in every imagination, which may best suit its present taste and disposition. Hence arise raptures, transports, and surprising flights of fancy; and confidence and presumption still encreasing, these raptures, being altogether unaccountable, and seeming quite beyond the reach of our ordinary faculties, are attributed to the immediate inspiration of that Divine Being, who is the object of devotion. In a little time, the inspired person comes to regard himself as a distinguished favourite of the Divinity; and when this frenzy once takes place, which is the summit of enthusiasm, every whimsy is consecrated: Human reason, and even morality are rejected as fallacious guides: And the fanatic madman delivers himself over, blindly, and without reserve, to the supposed illapses of the spirit, and to inspiration from above. Hope, pride, presumption, a warm imagination, together with ignorance, are, therefore, the true sources of ENTHUSIASM.¹⁵⁵

In establishing the authenticity of what appears to be a revelation, instead of being persuaded by "the conceits of a warmed or overweening brain,"¹⁵⁶ we must, Locke said, let reason be "*our last judge and guide.*"¹⁵⁷ Reason demonstrates that God does not generally inform men without offering at the same time definite evidence that the revelation is from Himself.

Thus we see the holy men of old, who had revelations from God, had something else besides that internal light of assurance in their own minds, to testify to them that it was from God. They were not left to their own persuasions alone, that those persuasions were from God, but had outward signs to convince them of the Author of those revelations. And when they were to convince others, they had a power given them to justify the truth of their commission from heaven, and by visible signs to assert the divine authority of a message they were sent with. Moses saw the bush burn without being consumed, and heard a voice out of it: this was something besides finding an impulse upon his mind to go to Pharaoh, that he might bring his brethren out of Egypt: and yet he thought not this enough to authorize him to go with that message, till God, by another miracle of his rod turned into a serpent, had assured him of a power to testify his mission, by the same miracle repeated before them whom he was sent to.

155. "Of Superstition and Enthusiasm": *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Green and Grose, I, 145.

156. *Essay*, IV, xix, 7.

157. *Essay*, IV, xix, 14.

Gideon was sent by an angel to deliver Israel from the Midianites, and yet he desired a sign to convince him that this commission was from God. These, and several the like instances to be found among the prophets of old, are enough to show that they thought not an inward seeing or persuasion of their own minds, without any other proof, a sufficient evidence that it was from God; though the Scripture does not everywhere mention their demanding or having such proofs.¹⁵⁸

When the Holy Spirit does enlighten men's minds "*without any extraordinary signs accompanying it*," we may in such a revelation still be guided by reason and the authority of the Scriptures, "*unerring rules to know whether it be from God or no.*"¹⁵⁹

The conservative opinion of writers of literature that the Deity was not constantly speaking to men and intervening in the affairs of this world, is reflected in the popularity of the saying in Horace's *Art of Poetry*,

Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit,¹⁶⁰

repeated by Steele,¹⁶¹ Addison, and Fielding In *Jonathan Wild* we read:

OUR hero having with wonderful resolution thrown himself into the sea, as we mentioned at the end of the last chapter, was miraculously within two minutes after replaced in his boat; and this without the assistance of a dolphin or a seahorse, or any other fish or animal, who are always as ready at hand when a poet or historian pleases to call for them to carry a hero through the sea, as any chairman at a coffee-house door near St. James's to convey a beau over a street, and preserve his white stockings. The truth is, we do not choose to have any recourse to miracles, from the strict observance we pay to that rule of Horace,

*Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus.*¹⁶²

With this precept of Horace as a motto, Addison wrote a paper for the *Spectator* ridiculing those who imagined that every trial and affliction were arranged by God to punish man personally for his sins, that

158. *Essay*, IV, xix, 15.

159. *Essay*, IV, xix, 16.

160. *De Arte Poetica*, 191-2.

161. *Christian Hero*, 2nd ed., London, 1701, p. 60.

162. Fielding, *Jonathan Wild*, bk. II, cap. 12: *Works*, ed. Browne, IV, 201-02.

every barn burned was a testimony of divine wrath against the wicked.¹⁶³ Only enthusiasts interpreted each singular event and every impulse of the mind as a revelation from on high.

While the word enthusiasm applies in a literal sense only to revelation and matters of religion, as Locke has used it in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, its meaning has been broadened by some to the extent of saying the "definition of Enthusiasm is that it is the negation of the eighteenth century point of view,"¹⁶⁴ which would imply that the temperament of this century was one of unrelied frigidity. Such misrepresentation is inevitable when it is supposed that the Eighteenth Century was anathematizing with the expression enthusiasm anything other than certain religious excesses, especially an absurd credulity in matters of revelation. Writers, with few exceptions, reserved the word for this purpose, though they were not all so careful as Sterne to follow Locke's interpretation. Faith, Sterne said, is defined by enthusiasts "not as a rational assent of the understanding, to truths which are established by indisputable authority, but as a violent persuasion of mind, that they instantaneously become the children of GOD."¹⁶⁵ In another sermon he makes it equally clear that he considered enthusiasts those who believed God was constantly directing their thoughts.

The last mistake which I shall have time to mention, is that which the methodists have revived, for 'tis no new error—but one which has misled thousands before these days whenever enthusiasm had got footing,—and that is,—the attempting to prove their works, by that very argument which is the greatest proof of their weakness and superstition;—I mean that extraordinary impulse and intercourse with the Spirit of God which they pretend to, and whose operations (if you trust them) are so sensibly felt in their hearts and souls, as to render at once all other proofs of their works needless to themselves.—This, I own, is one of the most summary ways of proceeding in this duty of self-examination; and, as it proves a man's works in the gross, it saves him a world of sober thought and inquiry after many vexatious particulars.¹⁶⁶

163. *Spectator*, No. 483.

164. J. E. V. Crofts, "Enthusiasm," *Eighteenth Century Literature: An Oxford Miscellany*, p. 133.

165. "On Enthusiasm": *Sermons*, II, 196.

166. "Self-Examination": *Sermons*, I, 166.

By enthusiasm Sterne obviously meant only that unreasonable faith in divine illuminations indulged by Methodists, Quakers¹⁶⁷ and similar religious sects. In his *Dictionary* Johnson gives as the first meaning of enthusiasm, "a vain belief of private revelation," and he cites a sentence from Locke to illustrate this usage. This is the sense in which Bolingbroke uses the term in the following passage:

Our Quakers, our Methodists, and Enthusiasts of every sort and in every religion, are confirmed . . . in the belief that the spirit of God descends upon them, is inspired into them, excites and enlightens their minds, and enables them by its powerful operation to utter all the extravagancies, which are in their opinion so many divine truths.¹⁶⁸

If other writers did not always use the word enthusiasm to designate an ungrounded belief in revelation, nevertheless they most generally applied the term to some form of religious extravagance. Swift characterized a certain group of prophets with the phrase, "ridiculous deluded enthusiasts,"¹⁶⁹ and further designated as enthusiasm the sexual orgies of various religious cults.¹⁷⁰ Enthusiasm to Chesterfield meant crusades¹⁷¹ and missions,¹⁷² while Fielding used the word to define the extreme antithesis of atheism.¹⁷³ He also observed that Heartfree's over-confidence in a future life was touched with enthusiasm,¹⁷⁴ although this was exactly the faith to be embraced in the *Night Thoughts*. If such assurance in immortality is enthusiastic, then, Edward Young would say,

. . . all are weak,
But rank enthusiasts. To this godlike height
Some souls have soar'd.¹⁷⁵

Without more illustrations it is evident that the word enthusiasm was generally used only to describe religious extravagances, particularly the unwarranted belief of numerous sects that God was ever revealing divine truths to them, his chosen vessels. The Eighteenth Cen-

167. "Humility": *Sermons*, II, 50.

168. *Works*, III, 469.

169. *Bickerstaff Pamphlets: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, 306.

170. "Discourse concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit": *Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, I, (191)-210.

171. *Letters to His Son*, II, 37. Letter 126.

172. *Ibid.*, II, 312. Letter 180.

173. *Tom Jones*, bk. II, cap. 5: *Works*, ed. Browne, VI, 91.

174. *Jonathan Wild*, bk. III, cap. 2: *Works*, ed. Browne, IV, 217.

175. *Night Thoughts*, VI, 603-05.

tury by its usage of this term does not indicate an opposition to every imaginable emotional expression. It is further apparent that enthusiasm, defined as religious excess, was decried by all those writers whose opinion we esteem,—all, with the possible exception of Edward Young, whose isolation from the popular currents of philosophical thought is well reflected in the lonely drama of his *Night Thoughts*.

The subject of enthusiasm, and the discussion of probability and faith, have carried us far from the consideration of actual knowledge, which, it may be repeated, remains extremely limited. A principal object of the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* is to make us realize "what a darkness we are involved in, how little it is of Being, and the things that are, that we are capable to know."¹⁷⁶ Despite the discord and controversy surrounding many statements in the *Essay*, there was a universal assent to Locke's main thesis that the human understanding is imperfect and that knowledge has its restrictions. Even in *Martinus Scriblerus*, where no pains are spared in ridiculing the subtleties of the *Essay*, it is allowed that "in human understandings" there are "potential falsities."¹⁷⁷ Isaac Watts, after exerting all his philosophical powers to show the great capacities of the mind and the breadth of our knowledge, came no less certainly to the conclusion that the human understanding is for ever limited. In his youth he had complained:

I hate these Shackles of the Mind
 Forg'd by the haughty Wise;
Souls were not born to be confin'd,
 And led like Sampson Bound and Blind.¹⁷⁸

At this period in his thinking Watts was not unlike Blake, who at the close of the century wrote with bitterness:

Thus the terrible race of Los & Enitharmon gave
Laws & Religions to the sons of Har, binding them more
And more to Earth, closing and restraining,
Till a Philosophy of Five Senses was complete.
Urizen wept & gave it into the hands of Newton & Locke.¹⁷⁹

^{176.} *Essay*, IV, iii, 29.

^{177.} *Martinus Scriblerus*: Pope, *Works*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, 313.

^{178.} "Free Philosophy": *Horæ Lyricæ*, London, 1706, p. 154.

^{179.} "Song of Los": *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, London, 1927, p. 274.

But later Watts patiently submitted to wear the shackles of the mind, and in the pages of his own philosophy admonished the young:

Do not expect to arrive at Certainty in every Subject which you pursue. There are a hundred Things wherein we Mortals in this dark and imperfect State must be content with Probability; where our best Light and Reasonings will reach no further.¹⁸⁰

With his characteristic facility for sharpening ideas to a piercing point, Pope gave an acute expression to the universal consciousness of ignorance.

Tell, for you can, what is it to be wise?
 "Tis but to know how little can be known.¹⁸¹

Bolingbroke, his confederate, was particularly wise in the ways of human ignorance, which was in itself no small cause for pride and vanity, for

This is learned ignorance, of which the greatest philosophers have no reason to be ashamed. "Rationem—harum gravitatis proprietatum ex phænomenis nondum potui deducere, et hypotheses non fingo," said our NEWTON, after having advanced natural knowledge far beyond his contemporaries, on the sure foundations of experiment, and geometry. How preferable is this learned ignorance to that ignorant learning, of which so many others have foolishly boasted?¹⁸²

"The human mind," said Johnson, "is so limited, that it cannot take in all the parts of a subject, so that there may be objections raised against any thing." Lest we think Johnson is speaking unphilosophically here, let us add the rest of the passage. "There are," he continues, "objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum*; yet one of them must certainly be true."¹⁸³ By his own nature sensitive to a degree and given to a melancholy, Johnson was all too well prepared to adopt the philosophy of the day which told how strange are the forms about one and how little man knows of the life he leads in this miraculously created body.

180. *Improvement of the Mind*, Part I, cap. 14: ed. 1741, pp. 206–07.

181. *Essay on Man*, IV, 260–1.

182. *Works*, III, 393.

183. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, I, 444.

There are (said he) innumerable questions to which the inquisitive mind can in this state receive no answer: Why do you and I exist? Why was this world created? Since it was to be created, why was it not created sooner?¹⁸⁴

This same enigma of existence Butler states with what we hope is philosophical and not personal anxiety. "The whole end," he says, "for which God made, and thus governs the world, may be utterly beyond the reach of our faculties: there may be somewhat in it as impossible for us to have any conception of, as for a blind man to have a conception of colours."¹⁸⁵ Whatever individual expressions the notion of the limitation of knowledge may have taken, the conviction itself belonged to all and characterized the entire age. There is no better proof of this than the obvious popularity of the numerous remedies for human ignorance we have just been discussing, analogy and probability, and the less acceptable nostrum enthusiasm.

Amid the doubts and uncertainties attending human understanding, man was, nevertheless, to discover unsuspected security. The statements of human ignorance throughout the *Essay* are not more startling than Locke's frequently repeated assurance that morality is "amongst the *sciences capable of demonstration*".¹⁸⁶

The idea of a supreme Being, infinite in power, goodness, and wisdom, whose workmanship we are, and on whom we depend; and the idea of ourselves, as understanding, rational creatures, being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place *morality* amongst the *sciences capable of demonstration*: wherein I doubt not but from self-evident propositions, by necessary consequences, as incontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out, to any one that will apply himself with the same indifference and attention to the one as he does to the other of these sciences.¹⁸⁷

The reason that morality can attain the same certainty of mathematics is easily explained in the *Essay*. Since there is in the realm of nature perhaps nowhere a perfect square, the idea of this figure is wholly the invention of the mathematician. He himself makes the complex idea; he alone decides what ideas shall be contained in a

184. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. Hill and Powell, III, 342.

185. *Analogy*, I, ii, 3.

186. *Essay*, IV, iii, 18.

187. *Ibid.*

perfect square. Having therefore all the ideas in his own mind, the mathematician can demonstrate with exactitude what such a square is. A natural science, on the contrary, cannot be brought to such certainty, for it must always be dependent upon substances of which man has no complete knowledge. But in mathematics, where one is under no obligation to follow nature, squares and circles may be devised at pleasure, and, after the ideas they shall contain have been chosen, one may demonstrate the relation, or agreement and disagreement of these ideas, to an exactitude equalling perfect knowledge. Since morality, like mathematics, is wholly an invention of the human mind, the idea of truth can become as certain a part of human knowledge as that of a perfect square. Moral ideas, to follow Locke's words,

being combinations of several ideas that the mind of man has arbitrarily put together, without reference to any archetypes, men may, if they please, exactly know the ideas that go to each composition, and so both use these words in a certain and undoubted signification, and perfectly declare, when there is occasion, what they stand for.¹⁸⁸

Since in the formation of moral ideas, such as truth and falsehood, man has a free hand, these ideas can be demonstrated with the same precision that a mathematician can explain a perfect square.

One might, however, understand perfectly what truth, falsehood, and other moral terms signify, without knowing one or the other to be right or wrong. Human actions become morally good or evil only by referring them to that divine law which unquestionably exists.

That God has given a rule whereby men should govern themselves, I think there is nobody so brutish as to deny. He has a right to do it; we are his creatures: he has goodness and wisdom to direct our actions to that which is best: and he has power to enforce it by rewards and punishments of infinite weight and duration in another life; for nobody can take us out of his hands. This is the only true touchstone of moral rectitude; and, by comparing them to this law, it is that men judge of the most considerable moral good or evil of their actions; that is, whether, as duties or sins, they are like to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the ALMIGHTY.¹⁸⁹

188. *Essay*, III, xi, 15.

189. *Essay*, II, xxviii, 8.

This divine law of God, to which man is to relate his moral ideas, has "by an inseparable connexion, joined virtue and public happiness together, and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society."¹⁹⁰ To be specific, we can define with precision what truth and its opposite falsehood are, and we can see that God has so created the world that the one fosters and the other destroys life. Therefore since we can explain moral ideas with mathematical accuracy and we know by experience which of these God has made beneficial to society, morality becomes a science capable of exact demonstration.

From whence it is obvious to conclude, that, since our faculties are not fitted to penetrate into the internal fabric and real essences of bodies; but yet plainly discover to us the being of a God, and the knowledge of ourselves, enough to lead us into a full and clear discovery of our duty and great concernment; it will become us, as rational creatures, to employ those faculties we have about what they are most adapted to, and follow the direction of nature, where it seems to point us out the way. For it is rational to conclude, that our proper employment lies in those inquiries, and in that sort of knowledge which is most suited to our natural capacities, and carries in it our greatest interest, i.e. the condition of our eternal estate. Hence I think I may conclude, that *morality is the proper science and business of mankind in general.*¹⁹¹

Though the Eighteenth Century had been forbidden perfect knowledge in most matters, it was offered morality as a positive science if men would but bestow upon it their thought and effort. Locke's dictum was repeated in the *Spectator*,¹⁹² while Bolingbroke, who denied our knowledge of God's moral attributes, courted inconsistency far enough to say, "I consider theology, and ethics as the first of sciences in pre-eminence of rank."¹⁹³ Since moral definitions, however, share the natural imperfections of language, he would not allow that this science can attain mathematical certainty.¹⁹⁴ But Sterne, who has been almost constantly faithful to Locke, preserves on this significant issue his fidelity and confidence. Locke's philosophy, he said, is "a sacred philosophy, which the world must heed if it is to have a true universal religion, a true science of morals, and which man must

190. *Essay*, I, ii, 6.

193. *Works*, III, 327.

191. *Essay*, IV, xii, 11.

194. *Ibid.*, III, 429.

192. *Spectator*, No. 373.

heed also if he is to gain real command over nature."¹⁹⁵ Though we would not readily think of Sterne as a specialist working in a laboratory of morals, yet his own practice and words record his belief that truths relative to conduct can be demonstrated. "There is no need," he told his congregation, "that the everlasting laws of justice and mercy should be fetched down from above,—since they can be proved from more obvious mediums."¹⁹⁶ Yorick's sermons are evidence in themselves that he accompanied Locke in supposing morality to be the proper study and business of man, for they deal, not with theological and metaphysical speculations, but with the human problems of living implied in the topics happiness, philanthropy, evil-speaking, self-examination, pride and the like. The prevalence of the theme of conduct in all Sterne's religious utterances proves that he was professing the new science established by Locke's *Essay*.

With the assurance that man can possess certain knowledge in all matters regarding his actions in this world and that at least one significant science in life is capable of exact demonstration, there is more inclination to acquiesce in Locke's belief that

The infinite wise Contriver of us, and all things about us, hath fitted our senses, faculties, and organs, to the conveniences of life, and the business we have to do here. We are able, by our senses, to know and distinguish things: and to examine them so far as to apply them to our uses, and several ways to accommodate the exigencies of this life. We have insight enough into their admirable contrivances and wonderful effects, to admire and magnify the wisdom, power, and goodness of their Author. Such a knowledge as this, which is suited to our present condition, we want not faculties to attain. But it appears not that God intended we should have a perfect, clear, and adequate knowledge of them: that perhaps is not in the comprehension of any finite being. We are furnished with faculties (dull and weak as they are) to discover enough in the creatures to lead us to the knowledge of the Creator, and the knowledge of our duty; and we are fitted well enough with abilities to provide for the conveniences of living: these are our business in this world.¹⁹⁷

^{195.} Quoted in W. L. Cross, *Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, p. 302, from D-J. Garat, *Mémoires Historiques sur le XVIII^e. Siècle, et sur M. Suard*, II, 149.

^{196.} "Advantages of Christianity to the World": *Sermons*, II, 61.

^{197.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 12.

Our senses of hearing and sight, dull as they are, respond with the proper degree of sensitivity to our physical surroundings, for

in this globe of earth allotted for our mansion, the all-wise Architect has suited our organs, and the bodies that are to affect them, one to another. If our sense of hearing were but a thousand times quicker than it is, how would a perpetual noise distract us. And we should in the quietest retirement be less able to sleep or meditate than in the middle of a sea-fight. Nay, if that most instructive of our senses, seeing, were in any man a thousand or a hundred thousand times more acute than it is by the best microscope, things several millions of times less than the smallest object of his sight now would then be visible to his naked eyes, and so he would come nearer to the discovery of the texture and motion of the minute parts of corporeal things; and in many of them, probably get ideas of their internal constitutions: but then he would be in a quite different world from other people: nothing would appear the same to him and others: the visible ideas of everything would be different. So that I doubt, whether he and the rest of men could discourse concerning the objects of sight, or have any communication about colours, their appearances being so wholly different. And perhaps such a quickness and tenderness of sight could not endure bright sunshine, or so much as open daylight; nor take in but a very small part of any object at once, and that too only at a very near distance. And if by the help of such *microscopical eyes* (if I may so call them) a man could penetrate further than ordinary into the secret composition and radical texture of bodies, he would not make any great advantage by the change, if such an acute sight would not serve to conduct him to the market and exchange; if he could not see things he was to avoid, at a convenient distance; nor distinguish things he had to do with by those sensible qualities others do.¹⁹⁸

The suitability of the senses of hearing and sight to the needs of human life, as stated in this section of the *Essay*, was repeated in Thomson's *Summer*.

Nor is the stream
Of purest crystal, nor the lucid air,
Though one transparent vacancy it seems,
Void of their unseen people. These, concealed
By the kind art of forming Heaven, escape
The grosser eye of man: for, if the worlds

^{198.} *Essay*, II, xxiii, 12.

In worlds inclosed should on his senses burst,
 From cates ambrosial and the nectared bowl
 He would abhorrent turn; and in dead night,
 When Silence sleeps o'er all, be stunned with noise.¹⁹⁹

When Pope asserted in the *Essay on Man* the fitness of man's sight to the human state, he very probably was paraphrasing the same passage of the *Essay*.

The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
 Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
 No pow'rs of body or of soul to share,
 But what his nature and his state can bear.
 Why has not man a microscopic eye?
 For this plain reason, man is not a fly.
 Say what the use, were finer optics giv'n,
 T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?²⁰⁰

Speaking to the same purpose regarding man's faculty of hearing, Pope seems to remember the words of Thomson as well as of Locke.

If nature thundered in his op'ning ears,
 And stunned him with the music of the spheres,
 How would he wish that heav'n had left him still
 The whisp'ring zephyr, and the purling rill?²⁰¹

Thomson had said man would shrink abhorrent from dainties and wine were his sight fine enough to discover the minute details of their composition. Fortunately he had not the macabre imagination of Swift, whose Gulliver, while he stayed among the huge Brobdingnags, enjoyed a microscopic sight which nothing could escape.

The nurse to quiet her babe made use of a rattle, which was a kind of hollow vessel filled with great stones, and fastened by a cable to the child's waist: but all in vain, so that she was forced to apply the last remedy by giving it suck. I must confess no object ever disgusted me so much as the sight of her monstrous breast, which I cannot tell what to compare with, so as to give the curious reader an idea of its bulk, shape and colour. It stood prominent six foot, and could not be less than sixteen in circumfer-

199. *Summer*, 308-17.

200. *Essay on Man*, I, 189-96.

201. *Ibid.*, I, 201-04.

ence. The nipple was about half the bigness of my head, and the hue both of that and the dug so varified with spots, pimples and freckles, that nothing could appear more nauseous: for I had a near sight of her, she sitting down the more conveniently to give suck, and I standing on the table. This made me reflect upon the fair skins of our English ladies, who appear so beautiful to us, only because they are of our own size, and their defects not to be seen but through a magnifying glass, where we find by experiment that the smoothest and whitest skins look rough and coarse, and ill coloured.²⁰²

If Locke's statement of the propriety of our senses for the concerns of life was not sufficiently emphatic, Swift's enlightening observations should establish the conviction.

The parallel conclusion, that man's imperfect knowledge is suited as well as the senses for "our business in this world," was accepted by the rulers of Lilliput, who,

since government is necessary to mankind, . . . believe that the common size of human understandings is fitted to some station or other, and that Providence never intended to make the management of public affairs a mystery, to be comprehended only by a few persons of sublime genius, of which there seldom are three born in an age.²⁰³

In the field of the sciences a man might, Pope believed, master his subject if he would not attempt to understand the incomprehensible.

Nature to all things fixed the limits fit,
And wisely curbed proud man's pretending wit.

.

One science only will one genius fit;
So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
But oft in those confined to single parts.
Like kings we lose the conquests gained before,
By vain ambition still to make them more
Each might his sev'ral province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand.²⁰⁴

202. *Gulliver's Travels: Prose Works*, ed. Temple Scott, VIII, 93-4.

203. *Ibid.*, VIII, 60.

204. *Essay on Criticism*, 52-3, 60-7.

The same theory of the sufficiency of human knowledge for the affairs of the world was the theme of Bolingbroke's philosophy, summarized by Chesterfield for his son's benefit in the following sentences:

I have read his Philosophical Essay upon the extent of human knowledge, . . . He there shows very clearly, and with most splendid eloquence, what the human mind can, and cannot do; that our understandings are wisely calculated for our place in this planet, and for the link which we form in the universal chain of things; but that they are by no means capable of that degree of knowledge, which our curiosity makes us search after, and which our vanity makes us often believe we arrive at.²⁰⁵

Despite his confidence that human understanding and knowledge suffice for the duties of life, Locke could not suppress a desire for fuller wisdom. Since perfect knowledge appeared to him an impossibility in this earthly state, his thoughts throughout the *Essay* are frequently directed towards the next world, where he believed man's understanding would assume that excellence belonging to an immortal condition. Perfect knowledge! Locke speculated—

Such, if I may guess at things unknown, I am apt to think that angels have now, and the spirits of just men made perfect shall have, in a future state, of thousands of things which now either wholly escape our apprehensions, or which our short-sighted reason having got some faint glimpse of, we, in the dark, grope after.²⁰⁶

Addison cherished the hope that in after life the faculties of the human mind would become more like those of spiritual beings higher in the vital scale.

The object is too big for our capacity, when we would comprehend the circumference of a world, and dwindles into nothing, when we endeavour after the idea of an atom . . . we may well suppose that beings of a higher nature very much excel us in this respect, as it is probable the soul of man will be infinitely more perfect hereafter in this faculty, as well as in all the rest; insomuch that, perhaps, the imagination will be able to keep pace with the understanding, and to form in itself distinct ideas of all the different modes and quantities of space.²⁰⁷

205. *Letters to His Son*, IV, 43. Letter 270.

206. *Essay*, IV, xvii, 14.

207. *Spectator*, No. 420.

To the statements of the philosopher and the critic regarding the intellectual amendments to be expected in a future state, may be added the opinion of Isaac Watts, the divine, who reveals the same concern for the mind's improvement after death.

But if we can know nothing further of our *Souls*, i.e. of *Ourselves*, in this embodied and obscure State, than meerly to say *we are Thinking Beings*, if it is not allow'd us to be further acquainted with our own Essence or our Natural Powers, if we can never find out how our Spirits form their Ideas, or exert their Freedom of Will, how we move our Bodies or change our Relations of Place, it becomes us to lie humble at the Foot of our Maker, the Infinite and Almighty Spirit, and to content ourselves under our present Ignorance. . . . And when we shall have travel'd over the Stage of Time, by the Light and Influence of this Knowledge, we shall forsake at once these Scenes of Mortality and Shadows; we shall change this dusky Region for a brighter.²⁰⁸

The smarting consciousness of the inferiority of man's mental endowments and the deficiencies of his knowledge which Locke's philosophy had awakened in the Eighteenth Century, was assuaged by the belief that a state of intellectual perfection would be attained after the mind had passed beyond the limitations of human understanding.

208. *Philosophical Essays*, Preface.

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